

**Mary Gurney (1836 - 1917)**  
**and the reform of English female education**

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**Ph.D. thesis**

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I, Mary Campbell-Day confirm that the work in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

### Abstract

The thesis recovers Mary Gurney's 55 years of significant work for female education and analyses its legacies up to the present. Gurney was one of the leading educationalists of nineteenth and twentieth-century England. The thesis provides an answer to the question: how far and in what ways did Gurney make a contribution to English female education? During her career, she worked as an important policy-maker and administrator for at least twenty educational organisations, often simultaneously and in the case of some for between 25 and 45 years. However, for a variety of reasons, which are examined, her professional practice was largely excluded from the historical record.

Feminist and networking theories are used to assist in the analysis of evidence and to clarify conclusions. Gurney can be seen as a liberal rather than a radical feminist, who used networking to support her career. Indeed, Gurney worked closely for decades with many other important English reformers, such as Millicent Garrett Fawcett who classified Gurney as a leader in the educational wing of the Victorian and Edwardian women's movement. Over a hundred other members of Gurney's network are also identified in the thesis and their professional connections with Gurney are analysed. Nevertheless, her networking did not always provide the support she was seeking. Moreover, at times her work was complex, arduous, and not always successful in the ways she sought.

Apart from rebalancing the historiographical neglect of Gurney's significant career and legacies, this thesis also enhances the history of some educational institutions and recovers parts of other educationalists' work connected to female education. In addition, it produces new measurements of a Victorian and Edwardian network and it adds more depth to several perspectives reached through the lens of feminism about the educational work of women in the past.

## Impact Statement

My thesis has an impact within academia. It extends knowledge about the work of a leading nineteenth and twentieth century educationalist. Until the production of this thesis, relatively little was known about Mary Gurney's significant career and its legacies which extend to the present. That gap in the historical record is now filled to a considerable extent. This recovery of Gurney's work is part of a trend in educational historiography to revise the discipline's approach to the past. In particular, the thesis is a new contribution to feminist historians' revision of that historiography. Thus, while it is based on documentary evidence, it includes the use of feminist perspectives as well as networking concepts to help reach its conclusions.

Apart from adding to understanding of Gurney's work, this thesis impacts on academia in other ways. It extends knowledge about the history of twenty educational bodies, such as the Girls' Day School Trust, Girton College in Cambridge, Cheltenham Ladies' College, the Froebel Society, the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and the Victoria League. It recovers small parts of over 100 other educationalists' neglected work. In particular, the thesis provides new detail of work for female education by leading nineteenth-century men. Also, it produces new measurements of a Victorian and Edwardian network. In addition, it gives more depth to several perspectives, reached through the lens of feminism, on the past work of women.

Moreover, this thesis encourages further academic research, by acting as a base from which to develop a far greater understanding of the careers and legacies of some of Gurney's closest colleagues. For example, Edith Hastings was a headmistress, governor, and HMI over a 60 year period, yet up to the present there is no detailed

study of her work. Joshua Girling and Emma Wilks Fitch's discrete work for female education, especially for Girton College, also needs recovering in far greater detail. That important aspect of their professional lives has been and still is neglected within academia. In particular, he laboured and networked with Gurney across seven educational enterprises. Historiographical neglect applies less to his work as an SIC and ESC assistant commissioner, HMI, London University senator, BFSS Borough Road College principal, and leading exponent of teacher training in nineteenth-century England.

This thesis also has the potential to make an impact outside of higher education. I have already been asked to provide evidence and interpretations connected to it for use in an examination board's secondary education history course at A Level. Through scholarly and non-scholarly publications and societies its content could also reach members of the general public who are interested in history, especially those who are interested in female history, local history, or the origins of their own and family members' experiences of education. Lastly, educational institutions, which Gurney helped to create and which are still in existence, may take advantage of the thesis to review their understanding of their history, as might parent associations which are connected to those institutions.

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## Abbreviations

AEW: Association for the Education of Women

BBFS: British and Foreign Schools' Society

BC: Balliol College, University of Oxford

BED: Board of Education

CGX: Chicago Exhibition

CLC: Cheltenham Ladies' College

CP: College of Preceptors

DEC: Domestic Economy Congress

EDD: Education Department

ESC: Endowed Schools Commission 1869 - 1874

*EWR: Englishwoman's Review*

FS: Froebel Society

FTCC: Forsyth Technical College for Women Company

GC: Girton College

GLT: Gilchrist Trust

GSC/T: Girls' Public Day School Company/Trust

GPDSC/T: Girls' Public Day School Company/Trust

HAIA: Home Arts and Industries Association

HMI: Her/His Majesty's Inspector

JB: Joint Board/Oxford and Cambridge Schools Board

JC: Jamaica Commission 1865 - 1866

*JWEU: Journal of the Women's Education Union*

KS: Kensington Society

LASM: London Association of Schoolmistresses

LCC: London County Council

LCWW: London College for Working Women

LDKC: Ladies' Department, King's College, University of London

LEA: Ladies' Educational Association

LPC: Langham Place Circle

LSB: London School Board

LSEUT: London Society for the Extension of University Teaching

LUV: Memorial and address of thanks to the University of London on the opening of degrees to women

MP: Member of Parliament

NAPSS/SSA: National Association for the Promotion of Social Science/Social Science Association

NHBHS: Notting Hill and Bayswater High School

NLCS: The North London Collegiate School

NSEA: Nature Study Exhibition Association

PCA: M. Gurney's albums of press cuttings

PHC: Princess Helena College

PR: Official reporter to the Houses of Parliament

RDS: Royal Drawing Society of Great Britain and Ireland

RUVTA: Campaign for the Repeal of University Tests Act 1871

SA: Society of Arts

SEC: Secondary Education Commission/Bryce Commission 1894 - 1895

SIC: Schools Inquiry Commission/Taunton Commission 1864 - 1868

SPEW: Society for Promoting the Employment of Women

SUFF: Campaign for women's suffrage

SS: Sunday school, Wimbledon/Putney border

TTRS: Teachers' Training and Registration Society

UCLE: Campaign for the opening to women and girls of the University of

Cambridge's Local Examinations

VL: Victoria League

WEU: National Union for Improving the Education of Women of All

Classes/Women's Education Union

WHS: Wimbledon High School

WMD: Campaign for the opening to women of medical qualifications and registration for medical practice

WMDW: Campaign to extend medical science training to women at the University College of South Wales

WUV: Campaign against a university for women

WWC: M. Fawcett's 'Education Sub-committee' of the 'Commission on Women's Work'

Abbreviations only for table 4.1

*ESSAYS*: Scott, R. (ed.), (1899) *What is secondary education? And other short essays*, London: Rivingtons

*FMB*: Ridley, A. (1895 and 1896) *Frances Mary Buss and her work for education*, London: Longmans, Green

*LETTERS*: Gurney, E. M. (1902) *The letters of Emelia Russell Gurney*, London: James Nesbit

*NOTES*: Payne, J. (1876) *A visit to German schools: notes on a professional tour*, London: Henry King

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For my mother, Ellen, and her sisters, Katherine and Margaret Campbell

## Chapter one: Introduction

### 1

#### The rationale of the thesis

The rationale of this thesis is to recover the work of Mary Gurney and in the process answers this question: how far and in what ways did Gurney make a contribution to English female education? In brief, the answer is that Gurney's remarkable career and its legacies made a significant contribution in many ways to the development and survival of that education.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, she was one of the leading educationalists of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century England.<sup>2</sup>

Despite holding this foremost position within her society, the 55 years of Gurney's career and their public legacies have been largely excluded from the historical record. This thesis remedies that considerable omission. It ends the inaccurate view that Gurney's work should not be seen as a significant strand in the history of female education. It extends educational historiography by raising the level of her work's historical profile to that of more known reformers, such as Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Emily Davies, James Bryce, Michael Sadler, and Frances Buss, among others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis a career is taken to mean a person's work across their life-time. It can be multi-faceted and involve different rates of progression and regression. See Goodman, J. and Milsom, Z. 'Performing reforming and the category of age: empire, internationalism and transnationalism in the career of Reta Oldham, headmistress', Fitzgerald T. and Smyth, E. (eds.), (2014) *Women educators, leaders and activists: educational lives and networks 1900 - 1960*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 96 - 120, 112; Whitehead K. 'Mary Gutteridge: transnational careering in the field of early childhood education', Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 121 - 151, 122

<sup>2</sup> For a copy of the only extant photograph of Gurney see illustration 1.1 at the end of this chapter

<sup>3</sup> Ridley, A. (1895) *Frances Mary Buss and her work for education*, London: Longmans, Green; Stephen, B. (1927) *Emily Davies and Girton College* London: Constable; Strachey, R. (1931) *Millicent Garrett Fawcett*, London: J. Murray; Burstall, S. (1938) *Frances Mary Buss, an educational pioneer*, London: SPCK; Grier L. (1952) *Achievement in education: the work of Michael Ernest Sadler, 1885 - 1935*, London: Constable; Kamm, J. (1959) *A biography of Miss Buss and Miss Beale: how different from us*, London: The Bodley Head; Aldrich, R. (1995) *School and society in Victorian Britain: Joseph Payne and the new world of education*, Essex: College of Preceptors; Lowe, R. 'Personalities and policy: Sadler, Morant and the structure of education in England', Aldrich R. (ed.), (1996) *In history and in education*, London: Routledge, 98 - 115; Howarth, J. 'M. Fawcett', Matthew, H. and Harrison, B. (eds.), (2004) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford

The thesis substantiates these introductory claims through a close study of her work. It shows why, how, and to what effect this Victorian and Edwardian woman exercised growing power over high level and middle level policy-making and administration within educational organisations of a non-governmental nature.<sup>4</sup> It demonstrates that her career can be defined as a professional one in which she developed bureaucratic skills over time, despite not receiving a salary.<sup>5</sup> It makes clear that overall she was a feminist of the more liberal type, rather than of the more conservative type or more radical type. She worked without compromise for the cardinal principle of gender equality and against separation in the roles of the sexes but she did not work for the comprehensive restructuring of her society. Thus the thesis also illustrates that she did not work for class and race equality to the same degree as she worked for gender equality.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, apart from the specific task of recovering Gurney's career and its legacies, the thesis also revises, with varying degrees of impact, educational historiography in other ways. It rebalances the history of some educational institutions. It recovers smaller parts of other educationalists' work. It produces new measurements of a Victorian and Edwardian network. Lastly, it adds more depth to several perspectives reached through the lens of feminism on the educational work of women in the past.

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University Press, [www.oxforddnb.com/](http://www.oxforddnb.com/) (last accessed October 2020); Delamont, S. 'S. E. Davies', *ODNB*; Aldrich, R. 'J. Payne', *ODNB*; Lowe, R. 'M. Sadler', *ODNB*; Coutts, E. 'F. M. Buss', *ODNB*

<sup>4</sup> Power is taken to mean the exercise of control, influence, and ascendancy in a formal or an informal setting. It can undergo alteration, challenge, and variance. See Goodman, J. (1997) 'Constructing contradiction: the power and powerlessness of women in the giving and taking of evidence in the Bryce Commission, 1895', *History of Education*, 26, 3, 287 - 306

<sup>5</sup> Professional is taken to mean trained and competent practice within hierarchical governance. This is opposed to amateur practice and networked governance. See Watts, R. (1998) 'From lady teacher to professional, a case study of some of the first headteachers of girls' secondary schools in England', *Educational Management and Administration*, 26, 4, 339 - 351

<sup>6</sup> For the categorisation of past feminist reformers by historians which underpins my identification of Gurney's approach to reform see chapter 2.2.ii

### The focus

Gurney's work was chosen as the focus of this historical study because of some findings from my 1993 research for a dissertation presented as part of my Master of Arts degree. That dissertation became a key source for Janet Sondheimer's brief summary of Gurney's life for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.<sup>7</sup> However, in comparison to my present understanding, in the 1990s relatively little was understood about her work for the GST. Indeed, even less was understood about other aspects of her career and its legacies. Gurney remained a shadowy figure in educational history. Between 2015 and 2020 this situation changed. As a result of extensive and intensive research into 26 collections of primary evidence, stored in archives and libraries across England as well as in electronic databases, I recovered during those years considerable detail about her work and its significance was confirmed.<sup>8</sup>

In particular, that research proved that between 1872 and 1917 Gurney played a crucial but later under-appreciated role in the gradual creation and maintenance of 37 innovative high schools for girls across England and Wales. They belonged to the Girls' Public Day School Company, which in 1906 turned into the Girls' Public Day School Trust.<sup>9</sup> She worked for 45 years to make the GST schools academically equal to the first tier of boys' public and grammar schools by providing girls with access to a university education.

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell-Day, M. under the name of Camillin, M. (1993) *The 'active workers': the contribution of Mary Gurney and Penelope Lawrence to the development of female education and particularly secondary education for girls in late nineteenth-century England*, M.A. dissertation, Institute of Education, University of London; Sondheimer, J. 'M. Gurney', *ODNB*

<sup>8</sup> For the names and locations of these collections of primary sources see chapter 1.3

<sup>9</sup> Within this thesis the GPDSC will be referred to as the GSC and the GPDST as the GST, although when referring to both across time they will be referred to as the GST



Apart from her work for the Trust, from 1872 to 1917 Gurney had an important role in the development of the National Union for Improving the Education of Women of All Classes, which was known as the Women's Education Union. She also had a role in the development of Girton College in Cambridge, Cheltenham Ladies' College, and the Princess Helena College in London. In addition, across her career of 55 years she worked for the British and Foreign Schools' Society, the Froebel Society, and the Teachers' Training and Registration Society as well as for the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching and a German college for women. Many of her responsibilities for these organisations lasted two or three decades. Moreover, during most of her career Gurney campaigned for female suffrage and, as a member of the Ladies' Educational Association and the Association for the Education of Women, she campaigned for the award of degrees to women. Furthermore, for shorter periods of time she worked for eight other educational bodies. These included the Victoria League, the Forsyth Technical College Company, and the Royal Drawing Society of Great Britain and Ireland. During all this activity she also wrote books, pamphlets, and articles which were published.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, Gurney's career and its legacies are the focal point of this historical study. They are not the pivot of a collective biography. Nor indeed does this study use the biographical approach of analysing all aspects of Gurney's life. Instead it is the history of a woman's professional work, with elements of institutional history included in that occupational history. It is a career-history rather than a life-history. The partial use of a chronological framework across the chapters and an analysis of her upbringing in an early chapter are present only to enhance an understanding of her career.

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<sup>10</sup> For a chronological and more detailed summary of Gurney's work see table 1.1 at the end of this chapter

Furthermore, the thesis acts as a historical study by placing that career within a wider context, that of English society's history before and after her death. For example, it shows the lack of female education and the calls for that education in the 1870s. It deals with the English state's intervention into secondary education in the 1900s. It explores the impact of Gurney's work on English and transnational female education after 1917 across the rest of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

Admittedly, the analysis in the thesis is assisted by concepts which come from networking and feminist theories. Thus, an important area of the focus on Gurney's professional work is her use of what may be called feminist networking. Also the debates among feminist historians surrounding definitions of Victorian middle-class feminism and the challenges of auto/biography are discussed.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the thesis is primarily a historical study resulting from an empirical trawl through collections of Victorian and Edwardian documents and the subsequent critical analysis of that evidence. Therefore, as recommended, cross-reference and a consideration of the agenda behind the surface information in documents are part of that analysis. Also,

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<sup>11</sup> Transnational is taken to mean the flow of people, practices, and knowledge across national borders. It can occur in a forward and backward direction across many borders. See Trethewey, L. and Whitehead, K. (2003) 'Beyond centre and periphery: transnationalism in two teacher/suffragettes' work', Raftery, D. and Clarke, M. (eds.), (2017) *Transnationalism, gender and the history of education*, London: Routledge, 54 - 66

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction'; Goodman, J. and Harrop, S. (eds.), (2000) *Women and educational policy-making and administration in England: authoritative women since 1800*, London: Routledge; Martin, J. (2001) 'Reflections on writing a biographical account of a woman educator activist', *History of Education*, 30, 2, 163 - 176; Goodman, J. (2002) '“Their market values must be greater for the experience they have gained”: secondary school headmistresses and the empire 1897 - 1903', Goodman, J. and Martin, J. (eds.), *Gender, colonialism and education: the politics of experience*, London: Woburn Press; Goodman, J. (2003) 'Troubling histories and theories: gender and the history of education', *History of Education*, 32, 2, 157 - 174; Martin, J. (2003) 'The hope of biography: the historical recovery of women educator activists', *History of Education*, 32, 2, 219 - 232; Martin J. and Goodman, J. (2004) *Women and education 1800 - 1980*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Goodman, J. and Martin, J. (2007) 'Networks after Bourdieu: women, education and politics from the 1890s to the 1920s', *History of Education Researcher*, 80, 65 - 75; Martin, J. (2012) 'Interpreting biography in the *History of Education*: past and present', *History of Education*, 41, 1, 87 - 102; for other relevant references and analysis of the concepts and debates see chapter 2.1.i, 2.2, and 2.3

the potential alternative effect of documents on their contemporary readers, as opposed to their authors' intended effect, is considered.<sup>13</sup>

### 3

#### The primary evidence

Some of the collections of primary sources used were difficult to locate even before they were investigated. Moreover, most of the catalogues for them, and for the others which were easier to find, identified relatively little of the papers connected to Gurney's work. Indeed, some collections were in part or completely uncatalogued. Therefore, only through painstaking searches were many of the relevant first-hand documents found. Some of these documents were in the least investigated areas of organisations' remains, such as minutes from committees as opposed to the more surveyed minutes of governing bodies. In addition, the majority of the thousands of pages read were in Victorian or Edwardian manuscript. Apart from those in newspapers and periodicals, very few were printed or typed.<sup>14</sup> This handwriting was often difficult to read. Nevertheless, Gurney's career gradually came back into focus.

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<sup>13</sup> McCulloch, G. (2004) *Documentary Research in Education, History and the Social Sciences*, London: Routledge, 42 - 47, 101, 129

<sup>14</sup> GDS3/3/1 - 46 Council minute books, 1872 - 1920; GDS4/1/1 - 2 AGM minute books, 1872 - 1920; GDS6/2/1 - 2 Early Committee minute books, 1872 - 1877; GDS6/3/1/1 - 6 Education Committee minute books, 1875 - 1920; GDS6/4/1 - 7 Finance Committee minute books, 1877 - 1919; GDS6/5/1/1 - 4 Sites and Buildings Committee minute books, 1877 - 1918; GDS6/6/1 Examinations and Studies Committee minute book, 1884 - 1921; GDS6/7/1 - 4 Teachers Committee minute books, 1879 - 1916; GDS17/4/3 Art Teaching Committee minute book, 1910 - 1917; GPDSC/T/1 - 2 Association of the Headmistresses conference minute books, 1901 - 1923; GCGB2/1/2 - 22 Executive Committee and Council minute books, 1871 - 1923; CLC/1 - 3 Council and AGM minute books, 1872 - 1912; CLC/4 - 6 Finance, Estates Sub-committee, General Purposes, and Executive Committee minute books, 1875 - 1908; NFF/1/1/1 - 10 FS minute books, 1874 - 1920; PHC/1 - 2 Council and Executive Committee minute books, 1886 - 1923; EM1/1 LSEUT Universities Board minute book; EM1/12 LSEUT Wimbledon branch minute book, 1891 - 1901; EM1/4/1 - 3 BPEUT minute books, 1900 - 1915; VL/1 Council and AGM minute book, 1903 - 1950; VL/2 - 5 Executive Committee minute books, 1901 - 1913; MSS.Eur F147/1 - 10 NIA Committee minute books, 1870 - 1910; *Leeds Mercury* (1839 - 1899); *Daily News* (1863 - 1900) London; *Standard* (1871 - 1900) London; *Morning Post* (1871 - 1899) London; *Times* (1875 - 1917) London; *Manchester Guardian* (1899 - 1902); *Englishwoman's Review* (1873 - 1899) London; *Journal of the English Women's Union* (1873 - 1881) London

It seemed the uncertain nature of the organisations she founded, or joined soon after they began, made their early keeping of records less formulaic than it later became. Therefore, some of the primary material was more revealing than anticipated. Also, it appeared the continuing lack of transcription into print made many documents less filtered than they might have been, even the more structured later records. As expected, the audience for whom the material was designed made a clearer and further difference to the level of caution applied when it was compiled. Thus, the more public minutes of the governors' and share-holders' meetings which Gurney attended were far more guarded and anodyne than the more private minutes of the committees to which she belonged throughout her career. These latter documents conveyed the tensions and challenges which Gurney and others had to overcome so the organisations could survive. In contrast, from 1877 the minutes of the GST's Council were printed and they lost the unguarded alterations written by hand as well as the unwary spontaneity of their predecessors' manuscripts. Fortunately, the minutes of the GST's committees remained hand-written during Gurney's working life, as did most of the minutes of other governing bodies and committees for which she laboured.

The documents of most value to an understanding of Gurney's work were found in the archive of the GST, held at University College London Institute of Education. Primary sources held in GC in Cambridge and in CLC were also of considerable value to it. UCL's library databases of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century newspapers and periodicals were important as leads to other sources and as confirmation of knowledge acquired elsewhere. So too were the databases of United Kingdom Census and of the UK's Probate Registry. The FS's records, held at London's University of Roehampton, as well as the material held at two of the GST's London head offices and at Wimbledon High School were also worth using. In

addition, the British Library in London provided access to what became, unexpectedly, some key primary publications. However, it was the uncatalogued Victoria League's archive in London's Bayswater which delivered one of the greatest surprises about Gurney's career. Indeed, only late into the project were the VL's past general purpose and nature understood.

A smaller amount of knowledge was recovered from the archives at Castle Howard in Yorkshire and at the PHC near Hitchin in Hertfordshire. Nevertheless, both still had archives worthy of investigation, although the latter one was also uncatalogued. The records of the LSEUT and of London University's Board to Promote the Extension of University Teaching were not easy to locate, but worth the effort. Once found in London University's Senate House Library they revealed more about Gurney's career than was expected. In addition, London University's archive held in the same library, the Institute of Historical Research's library also housed in Senate House, UCL's archive, and UCL IOE's library were of some value in the search for relevant primary evidence

In contrast, the Women's Library at the London School of Economics and Political Science held little relevant material. The archives of the BFSS, of the TTRS, and of the Maria Grey College were also disappointing, despite their accessibility at London's Brunel University. However, a study of the National Indian Association papers, held at the British Library, was the most disappointing. They did not, as hoped, explain Gurney's work for Indian students. Nevertheless, that was the only fruitless search undertaken.

Investigation also took place into the London sites and remaining buildings where Gurney, her colleagues, and some members of her family worked and lived. Visits to

them improved an understanding of her professional routines and of her career-paths, including the social and economic circumstances which underpinned them. For example: tracing on foot the relative position of relevant sites confirmed the reasoning behind Gurney's personal relocations between 1879 and 1891. These moves placed her homes close to the GST's head offices and her other places of work. Also viewing the appearances and settings of the still standing buildings confirmed the common financial status of Gurney and her colleagues, a status which probably strengthened their working ties.

Therefore, visiting this material evidence also enhanced an existing understanding of her relational and spatial network. Her London homes were in relatively close proximity to the homes of other leaders of female education. Furthermore, the discovery that her and her circle's central London offices and drawing-rooms were relatively close demonstrated how the boundaries between Gurney's professional and private worlds blurred to create her feminine public sphere. The discovery also explained how that networked space as well as her professional travel was able to spread across London, England, and Europe with the help of relatives and colleagues. Nevertheless, most of her work took place in the upper middle-class parts of a relatively small area of the capital bordered by Bayswater in the north, Bloomsbury and Westminster in the east, Putney Vale and Wimbledon in the south and Kensington and Chelsea in the west.<sup>15</sup>

However, despite the use made of sites and buildings, there was a particular aspect of the relevant primary documents which motivated and focussed my study of

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<sup>15</sup> For the geographical position of the sites connected to Gurney's work in England and the sites where she, her relatives, and her colleagues lived in central London see maps 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 at the end of chapter 5

Gurney's career far more than any other aspect of the sources under consideration. It was the contemporary understanding of that career as demonstrated in words and action.

4

Contemporary understanding

i

Published

Published assessments of Gurney's work by some of her colleagues provided initial, and thereafter regular, encouragement. Of course, they were not accepted without question and needed to be proved using the records of the organisations for which she worked. Nevertheless, the assessments were intriguing and constant spurs to the research into those records and parts of them were eventually supported by that research. In particular, Gurney's obituaries needed to be treated with considerable suspicion. However, it was possible to extract from them a sense of her career's value to some of those who shared her educational space. Moreover, other commentaries, published before and after her death, appeared more grounded and therefore of more use as justifications for the focus of the thesis.

For instance, in 1924 Millicent Garrett Fawcett, who campaigned for female education as well as female suffrage and with whom Gurney worked for those causes for at least forty years, wrote of her career's significance:

It was, of course, obvious that work for a political freedom represented only one phase of a many-sided movement. Speaking generally, its most important departments dealt with (1) education, (2) an equal moral standard between men and women, (3) professional and industrial liberty, and (4) political status. My special experience and training fitted me best, as I thought, for work on behalf of the fourth...My leaders on the education question were Miss Davies, Professor Henry Sidgwick, Mrs William Grey and Miss Mary Gurney; on the equal moral standard they were Mrs Josephine Butler, Dr Elizabeth Blackwell,

Sir James Stansfeld and Professor Stuart; on professional and industrial freedom, my sister Elizabeth [Elizabeth Garrett Anderson] and Miss Jessie Boucherett<sup>16</sup>

Garrett Fawcett placed Gurney's work on an equal footing with her own and that of others who, unlike Gurney, came to be seen in historiography as leaders of the different aspects of the Victorian and Edwardian women's movement. Given the esteem with which Garrett Fawcett's career was viewed, this judgement could not be ignored. Indeed, the research gradually revealed that Garrett Fawcett's perspective on Gurney's work, based on their collaboration across at least nine organisations and campaigns, was accurate.<sup>17</sup> However, historians had not seemed to notice this distinctive evaluation. The rationale of the thesis could have been driven by just this appraisal, although that was not necessary. There were other contemporary assessments which also attributed a high value to Gurney's work and required confirmation.

Her obituaries in the *Times*, in the *Times Educational Supplement*, and in the *Journal of Education and School World* included large parts of a resolution passed and made public by the GST's Council on October 17<sup>th</sup> 1917. The resolution recorded:

the profound sense of irreparable loss to the Trust and to the Cause of Women's and Girls' education in the death of Miss Mary Gurney...[She was] among the chief...[of] a few able women who were in advance of their time...probably the most influential Member of the Council...[because of her] thorough knowledge of the Schools and of the business of the Trust made through a long course of years.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Fawcett, M. G. (1924) *What I remember*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 117 - 118; Collini, S. 'H. Sidgwick', *ODNB*

<sup>17</sup> Fawcett, M. G. (1868) 'The education of women of the middle and upper classes', Hamilton, S. and Schroeder, J. (eds.), (2007) *Nineteenth-century British women's education 1840 - 1900*, London: Routledge, 171 - 177; for the names of those organisations and campaigns see table 4.1 at the end of chapter 4

<sup>18</sup> GDS3/3/43 Council minute book, (Oct.1917) 85



At the same time, the Association of Headmistresses passed a resolution setting on record ‘the pioneer work of Miss Mary Gurney in promoting the higher education of girls and women’.<sup>19</sup> Again, these judgements acted as prompts to the research.

Moreover, in 1918 GST councillor Laurie Magnus cited in his memoir of Gurney the recollections of a colleague from Cambridge University. The colleague remembered her thorough grasp of the Trust’s business and her gift for handling it. Magnus also went on to discuss that grasp, albeit without substantive detail. Nevertheless, he left no doubt that he was thinking of the financial as well as the academic aspect of educational governance when he wrote: ‘She performed her duties as director conscientiously. She was always careful of the shareholders’ interests, and, in latter years...Miss Gurney was ever anxious to be faithful to shareholders’ rights’.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in 1918 he referred to her quick ear and eye for incompetence in those she interviewed for headships, while in his 1923 chronicle of the Trust he felt it was difficult to do her justice when considering her 45 years of work for the organisation.<sup>21</sup>

In particular, Magnus’ assessment of Gurney’s financial governance acted as an investigative spur and the research gradually confirmed that she did not just chair the GST Council’s Education Committee, Teachers Committee, and Examination and Studies Committee. She was on its Finance Committee and its Building and Sites Committee. She was shown as keenly aware that the schools’ creation and expansion depended upon the public’s purchase of shares in the GSC and the payment of satisfactory dividends on those shares, which in turn depended on efficient educational

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<sup>19</sup> GDS3/8/36 Papers relating to Council member, M. Gurney

<sup>20</sup> Magnus, L. (1918) *Mary Gurney, an impression and a tribute*, Westminster: GPDST, 9

<sup>21</sup> Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 13 - 14; Magnus, L. (1923) *The jubilee book of the Girls’ Public Day School Trust 1872 - 1923*, Cambridge: [GPDST?], 41

policy-making and administration in order to foster a strong academic reputation.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, it may have been another indication of her business acumen that by the end of her life she owned only 100 £5 GST shares. This stood in contrast to her ownership of over £16,000 worth of shares in other companies across the world, which was the equivalent in today's terms of shares worth just over £1.1 million.<sup>23</sup> By then the Trust was on the verge of bankruptcy, despite and because of its academic achievements.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Gurney's career in education was intriguingly complex as it required her to also act as a business woman, a company director, and a company executive officer during an era when the creation and management of companies and the ownership of shares were primarily seen as the preserve of entrepreneurial men.<sup>25</sup>

The published comments on Gurney's work by other organisations also encouraged my research into it. In 1917 GC reported on how the College had lost through Gurney's death one of its most valued supporters. It felt she had sought to further its prosperity in every way. A year later the Mistress of GC from 1903 until 1916, Emily Elizabeth Constance Jones, published a memoir of Gurney. She referred to her unusual intellectual capacity and forceful character as well as restating her value to GC's governing body. Jones later classified Gurney with Emily Davies and with Elizabeth Welsh, her predecessor as Mistress, as a prominent member of the College.<sup>26</sup> In addition, an article in one of CLC's 1918 magazines identified Gurney as a pioneer

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<sup>22</sup> GDS6/4/6, Finance Committee minute book, 1909 - 1913, circular attached to 268, 312

<sup>23</sup> The last will and testament of M. Gurney, 18<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1915 and the last will and testament of A. Gurney, 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1920, Probate Registry, [www.probaterecord.gov.uk/](http://www.probaterecord.gov.uk/) (last accessed Sept. 2017); GCAR/2/6/38 Papers relating to the estates of M. Gurney and A. Gurney, executor's accounts; Inflation calculator, [www.bankofengland.co.uk/](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/) (last accessed Nov. 2020)

<sup>24</sup> GDS6/4/7 (22<sup>nd</sup> April 1914) Memorandum by the Finance Committee to the Council

<sup>25</sup> Freeman, M., Pearson, R. and Taylor J. 'Between Madam Bubble and Kitty Lorimer, women investors in British and Irish stock companies', Laurence, A., Maltby, J. and Rutterford, J. (eds.), (2009) *Women and their money 1700 – 1950, essays on women and finance*, Oxon: Routledge, 105

<sup>26</sup> Girton College reports 4 (Nov. 1917) 11; *Girton Review* (May 1918); Constance Jones, E. (1922) *As I remember: an autobiographical ramble*, London: A and C Black, 50

of the movement for the improvement of female education, just as the AHM had done.<sup>27</sup> While Millicent Fawcett's assessment of Gurney's was more striking, these judgements carried the same burden of proof.

Furthermore, Annie Ridley in her 1895 biography of Buss classified Gurney as one of the 'active workers' in the women's movement, a classification she also used for Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff. Ridley used private letters to show Gurney's part with Buss and Grey in the creation of the WEU and the GSC as well as her involvement with Fawcett and Buss in other work for women's education. Ridley also noted that she was a woman of few words who spoke straight to the point. In the same book, John Farmer of Balliol College in Oxford and the GSC's music examiner was quoted as likening Gurney to the master of that college, Benjamin Jowett, whom he considered fearless in the cause of education. Farmer had no difficulty in seeing her as comparable to a powerful member of the Victorian male educational establishment who networked with other leading supporters of female education such as Florence Nightingale and Henrietta Stanley. Indeed, it was Gurney who introduced Farmer to Buss.<sup>28</sup>

Lastly, a more specific assessment of Gurney's work came from 1879 when George Goschen, Liberal Unionist MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the British government from 1887 to 1892, and president of the LSEUT, commented on her work for that society. According to a newspaper item, he recorded in a speech how she had worked for it from its beginning and provided constant and valuable advice.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine* (spring 1918)

<sup>28</sup> Ridley, *Buss*, 19, 225 - 226; Walker, E., revised by Jones, J. 'J. Farmer', *ODNB*; Hinchcliff, P. and Prest, J. 'B. Jowett', *ODNB*

<sup>29</sup> Gurney, M. (ed.), (1882) signed and dated album of press cuttings, 1878 - 1903, 3, GPDST archive (1993); Spinner, T. 'G. Goschen', *ODNB*

However, the contemporary, albeit questionable, assessments of Gurney's career were not the only powerful signs that her career was probably worth the effort of new and deep research.

ii

### Unpublished

Initial investigation revealed the willingness of prominent educationalists to work with Gurney and this too suggested, along with their words, that the thesis should concentrate on her career. For example, in 1872 Gurney was accepted by seven leading educators as a partner in the founding of the GSC's provisional Council and by six of them as a co-signatory of the Company's Articles of Association.

One of the men was the renowned Victorian educationalist James Kay-Shuttleworth, who also became chairman of that provisional Council. He had experience in foremost British educational policy-making and administration, both inside and outside of government, stretching back to the 1830s.<sup>30</sup> Another was the founder of the College of Preceptors, Joseph Payne, who became in 1872 the first Professor of the Science and Art of Education and who was chairman of the WEU's Central Committee by 1873. A third was George Bartley, assistant director of the Science and Art Department, editor of the *Journal of the Women's Education Union*, and a Conservative MP in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>31</sup> The last of the men was Charles Roundell. He had worked for the 1871 Repeal of University Tests Act and acted as a Liberal MP in the same decades as Bartley sat in Parliament. Roundell was the only founder not required to sign the Articles but he did become the chairman of the

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<sup>30</sup> Selleck R. (1995) *James Kay Shuttleworth, journey of an outsider*, London: Routledge; Selleck, R. 'J.K. Shuttleworth', *ODNB*

<sup>31</sup> Owen, W., revised by McConnell, A. 'G. C. T. Bartley', *ODNB*

Company's permanent Council from at least 1873 until 1877.<sup>32</sup> Apart from Gurney, the female founding councillors and signatories were Maria Grey, her sister Emily Shirreff, and Henrietta Stanley. They were already campaigners for the education of women and girls in the 1860s and involved in the creation of the WEU.<sup>33</sup> That these seven important educationalists, and in particular Kay-Shuttleworth, did not question Gurney's status as a colleague signalled that a focus on her work was justified.

Evidence of Gurney's working relationship with another leader of education, George Lyttelton, also justified it. As a member of the 1864 to 1868 Schools Inquiry Commission, Lyttelton was involved in the production of the Taunton Report. In addition, he was leader of the 1869 to 1874 Endowed Schools Commission and promoted the use of existing endowments for the establishment of girls' secondary education. Gurney and he became colleagues during the 1871 inauguration of the WEU. In addition, by 1873 his daughter, Lucy Lyttelton Cavendish, was at work with Gurney on the GSC's Council. While a less powerful educational figure than her father, Cavendish was eventually appointed one of only three female members of the 1894 to 1895 Secondary Education Commission. Her presence as a colleague within the GSC again indicated that Gurney was able to move within the higher circles of Victorian reform.<sup>34</sup>

Belief in Gurney's ability was further demonstrated by her wide and long professional relationships with Joshua Girling Fitch and James Bryce. Fitch was one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools, as well as an assistant commissioner of the

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<sup>32</sup> GDS3/7/1 Papers relating to Council chairman, C. Roundell

<sup>33</sup> Levine, P. 'M. Grey', 'E. Shirreff', *ODNB*, Sutherland, G. 'H. Stanley', *ODNB*; Ellsworth, E. (1979) *Liberators of the female mind: the Shirreff sisters, educational reform, and the women's movement*, London: Greenwood Press

<sup>34</sup> *Morning Post* (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1871) 2; *Journal of the Women's Education Union* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) London, 16 and 32; Bailey, J. (ed.), (1927) *The diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, London: John Murray; Gordon, P. 'G. W. Lyttelton', *ODNB*

SIC and of the ESC. Also, he worked closely with Payne as a leading exponent of teacher training, he was a principal of the BFSS's innovatory Borough Road College, and he became a senator of London University. In 1896 he was knighted for his services to education.<sup>35</sup> Bryce was an assistant commissioner of the SIC and a founder member of GC as well as an MP who worked for the 1871 Repeal of University Tests Act. Lastly, from 1894 to 1895 he was leader of the SEC.<sup>36</sup> My research gradually revealed that from the 1870s to the 1900s Gurney and Fitch worked together in at least nine educational enterprises and Gurney and Bryce were colleagues in at least seven. In addition they all worked together in at least three.<sup>37</sup> Once again, as more connections to leading educationalists came to light, so Gurney's work appeared more important.

Similarly, the esteem in which Gurney was held was made clear in 1903. She was recruited into the Education Sub-committee of the VL by Michael Sadler, Professor of Education at Manchester University. Sadler was given the task of finding high-ranking educationalists to join him in the committee. He had been a Bryce commissioner and a leading civil servant in the Board of Education.<sup>38</sup> Two other recruits were the Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Halford Mackinder, and another professor, Wyndham Dunstan, the Director of the Imperial Institute.<sup>39</sup> The simultaneous presence of these three men as VL colleagues confirmed the survival of Gurney's educational influence into the twentieth century.

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<sup>35</sup> Robertson, A. 'J. G. Fitch', *ODNB*

<sup>36</sup> Harvie, C. 'J. Bryce', *ODNB*

<sup>37</sup> For the names of these enterprises see table 4.1 at the end of chapter 4

<sup>38</sup> Lowe, R. 'M. Sadler', *ODNB*

<sup>39</sup> VL/2 (27<sup>th</sup> June 1901) 63; VL reports, 1903, 15 and 1904, 11; Blouet, B. 'H. Mackinder', *ODNB*; Henry, T. 'W. Dunstan', *ODNB*

Moreover, if actions speak louder than words, then the 1917 choice of GST headmistresses to permanently create a Mary Gurney Memorial Scholarship spoke loudly of her status within her high school community. Sixty past and present heads became members of the committee established to raise the necessary money to send ex-pupils to GC to read classics. As late as 1945 the MGMS Committee continued to include all existing, as well as former, headmistresses. A more immediate sign of Gurney's status was referred to in a 1921 letter written by the then chairman of the GST Council, Maurice Llewelyn Davies, Emily Davies' nephew. He described the short time it took to raise the funds as a 'spontaneous movement'.<sup>40</sup> A much less noticeable action, but still an indicative one, occurred in 1923. Nearly a thousand schoolgirls at St Paul's Cathedral were instructed to name her, as well as Stanley, Grey, and Shirreff, as part of a jubilee prayer to give thanks for the foundation of the high schools.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, the willingness of prominent educationalists to seek and accept Gurney as a colleague from the 1870s to the 1900s, together with the written and other memorials, made the testing of that contemporary confidence seem a challenge worth pursuing.

## 5

### The structure

This introductory chapter explains the rationale of the thesis. That can be summarised as the recovery of Gurney's educational work thorough analysis and assessment of it. Nevertheless, the chapter also seeks to set the scene by providing more. It provides an

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<sup>40</sup> GDS21/2/4, Papers relating to the Mary Gurney Leaving Scholarship, 1921 - 1979

<sup>41</sup> Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 191; Kamm, J. (1971) *Indicative past, a hundred years of the Girls' Public Day School Trust*, London: Allen and Unwin, 138 - 139

introduction to the nature of Gurney's work, to the historiographical approach and impact of the study, and to the extant primary evidence used. It also explains how the project's focus developed from signposts within that evidence. If the reasoning behind this historical study is not made plain its validity may not be appreciated.

Chapter two explains the thesis's context by examining the reasons why the signposts were mainly ignored from the 1920s. Consequently there was a lack of knowledge about Gurney's work within educational historiography, a gap which to a great extent still needed filling in the 2020s. The chapter also explains the study's context by tracing, from the 1970s to the present, use of feminist and networking concepts within that historiography. These ideas assist the study's capacity to fill the gap. Without this chapter the originality of the thesis may seem less obvious and its theoretical approaches less applicable. In contrast, chapter three examines the wider background and the familial background to Gurney's career. In particular, it considers her initial access to relational and spatial networks which her family provided. This examination is important as it would be a mistake to see her as a lone figure who did not inherit supportive contacts and bases.

Chapters four and five analyse Gurney's work from the 1860s to the 1890s for the GSC and other organisations. They also consider her publications in those years. These chapters mainly seek to show that she put herself through an apprenticeship in educational governance before the 1890s. If that is not made plain, then her rise to leadership of female education and her consolidation of that position by the turn of the nineteenth century may be misunderstood as lacking challenge. Chapter six also concentrates on the difficulties of her work in the Edwardian period and its failure to ensure the GST's survival using her preferred model of governance and finance by the



time of her death. This chapter is essential to the creation of a balanced view about Gurney's career. It cannot be seen as one of continuous success.

Chapter seven examines Gurney's legacies, both the immediate more private consequences of her death and the more public importance of her career to education during the rest of the twentieth century. Without this assessment a full understanding of the significance of Gurney's work is not possible. Finally, chapter eight reflects on how educational historiography is rebalanced by the thesis. Apart from the raising of Gurney's profile to that of more known reformers, it also considers some additional correctives. Lastly, it addresses again the historical impact of Gurney's work. This final chapter consolidates the new understanding of Gurney's role in educational history, as developed in this thesis, and indicates avenues for future research.

Illus. 1.1: *The only extant photograph of M. Gurney, signed and dated by her (December 1894)*



GDS26/7 Papers relating to M. Gurney

*Some context to the commission and taking of this photograph:*

The photograph may have been a response to Gurney's May 1894 presence before the Bryce Commission as a representative of the GST and her June 1894 selection as a governor of Girton College. She and others may have felt she had reached a point in her career which merited a momentary record.

Table 1.1: *A synopsis of Gurney's educational work*

1850s: attended Wincobank Hall School, Yorkshire and scholar at home; tutor to her younger half-sisters and Sunday school teacher to girls

1863: became a member and honorary secretary of the governing committee of the girls' department of the British and Foreign Schools' Society's elementary school in Wandsworth, London

1871: her paper entitled: *What are the special requirements for the improvement of the education of girls?* read at the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science Congress; the *Englishwoman's Review* published her paper as an article under the heading: 'The establishment of girls' public middle class [sic] schools'; founding member of the Central Committee of the National Union for Improving the Education of Women of All Classes, known as the Women's Education Union; the publication of her letters to national newspapers on female education began.

1872: her pamphlet, based on her paper and with the new title: *Are we to have education for our middle-class girls? Or, the history of the Camden Collegiate Schools*, published for the WEU; signatory to the Articles of Association of the Girls' Public Day School Company, founding member of the GSC's Council, and membership of that Council's committees began.

1873: founding member of the GSC's Finance Committee; her article on 'Educational Conferences in Germany' published in the *Journal of the Women's Education Union*

1874: founding member of the Froebel Society; by this year she was a member of the Executive Committee of the Ladies' Educational Association which sought the award of degrees to women by the University of London; began the compilation of three

volumes of newspaper and journal cuttings on female education, with indexes, numbering at least 650 (last cutting dated 1903)

1875: became a member of Cheltenham Ladies College's Council; founding member of the GSC's Education Committee; membership of the FS's General Committee, Examinations of Kindergarten Teachers Committee, and Translation Committee began; identified publicly in the *Times* with the campaign for female suffrage

1876: became a member of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching's Council; membership of the Teachers' Training and Registration Society's Provisional Committee began; signatory to the WEU's memorial to the Charity Commission regarding female governors of girls' endowed schools; assisted with the editing of the posthumous publication of Joseph Payne's *A visit to German schools: notes of a professional tour*

1877: overcame proposed de-selection from the GSC's Council; not elected to the TTRS's Council; resigned from the FS's General Committee, also membership of the FS's Examinations Committee and Translation Committee had expired by this year; her translation entitled: *Kindergarten Practice Part 1* published; founding member of the GSC's Sites and Building Committee

1878: supported the creation in Kensington of the Ladies' Department of the University of London's King's College; became a referee for a woman's college in Germany's Eisenach; presented an address of thanks, with 2,000 signatures, to the Senate and Convocation of London University for the opening of degrees to women

1879: her translation entitled: *Kindergarten Practice Part 2* published; her contribution to *Opinions of women on women's suffrage* published by the Central

Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage; founding member of the GSC's Teachers Committee

1880: resigned from the position of hon. secretary of the governing committee of the girls' department of the BFSS's elementary school in Wandsworth

1881: membership of the WEU Central Committee ended (Committee disbanded); ended role as referee of the woman's college in Germany; by this year had become a member of the General Committee of the Domestic Economy Congress

1884: founding member of the GSC's Examinations and Studies Committee

1888: became a member of the committee established to create the Forsyth Technical College for Women Company; became a member of the Princess Helena College's Council, Executive Committee, and Education Committee

1889: became deputy chair of the GSC's Education Committee; signatory to Millicent Fawcett's published declaration in favour of female suffrage

1890: supported the campaign for the extension of medical science training to women at the University College of South Wales

1891: became a vice-president of the Royal Drawing Society of Great Britain and Ireland

1892: by this year had become a member of a committee supporting women undertaking educational research outside of Great Britain

1893: sought Gilchrist Trust scholarships for women to travel abroad for educational research

1894: GSC representative before the Secondary Education Commission (Bryce); membership of Girton College Executive Committee began

1895: membership of the governing committee of the girls' department of the BFSS's elementary school in Wandsworth ended (committee disbanded); her review of H. Stanley's educational work published in the *Journal of Education and School World*; assisted with the publication of A. Ridley's *Frances Mary Buss and her work for education*; supported the Association for the Education of Women's campaign for the award of degrees to women by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge

1896: by this year had become a member of the Home Arts and Industries Association

1897: became chair of the GSC's Education Committee; supported the campaign against the establishment of a university only for women

1899: her essay on 'The interest of girls in secondary education' published in Scott, R.P. (ed.) *What is secondary education? And other short essays*

1900: by this year had become a vice-president of the GSC; visited the education exhibition in Paris to inspect the GSC's high school work; probably created a book with photographs on the history of the GSC's high schools

1901: membership of the LSEUT Council ended (Council disbanded).

1902: became a member of the Nature Study Exhibition Association Committee

1903: became a member of the Victoria League's Council and Education Committee

1906: oversaw the transfer of the GSC into the Girls' Public Day School Trust; publication of her translations of German articles began in the *Antiquary* and in *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*

1907: resigned from the CLC's Council; revised the book on the history of the GST high schools

1908: became a member of the GST's planning committee for the Franco-British Exhibition and the International Drawing Exhibition

1909: founding member of the GST's Art Teaching Committee

1911: became chair of the GST's Examinations and Studies Committee; probably took part in the Suffragist boycott of the UK's census

1912 - 1914: became a member of the GST's Special Committee on the Proposed Endowment Fund, GST Building Fund Appeal Committee, and Public Dinner Executive Committee; again revised the book on the history of the GST's high schools

1913: resigned from the position of GST's Education Committee chair, became chair of the GST's Teachers Committee; between 1912 and this year membership of the VL Education Committee ended

1914 - 1916: resigned from the GST's Finance Committee and membership of the GST's Building Fund Appeal Committee ended (Committee disbanded); publication of her translations for the *Antiquary* and the *CLC Magazine* ended

1917: resigned from the PHC's Council, Executive Committee, and Education Committee; died while still a GST vice-president and a member of the GST's Council, Education Committee, Sites and Building Committee, Teachers Committee, Examinations and Studies Committee, and Art Teaching Committee; died while still a member of GC's Council; died while still a member of the VL's Council

1921: posthumous publication of her short history of the GST in *The encyclopaedia and dictionary of education*



## Chapter two: The context of the thesis

### Introduction

The originality of the thesis and the relevance of its theoretical approaches are highlighted by an understanding of its context. This thesis sits within an educational historiography which from the 1920s until the 2020s did not fully address the significance of Gurney's career. This neglect was in part caused by trends within that historical writing which reflected more general early twentieth-century historiographical trends. It was also a result of the inadequate record of her career established by her contemporaries within the GST, despite their initial attempts to avoid this. Lastly, it was caused to an extent by Gurney's personal circumstances and actions. Together, these factors misled succeeding generations of chroniclers and professional historians. However, an absence of sound record-keeping together with Gurney's femininity, lack of governmental position, middle-class concerns, and degree of modesty were not valid justifications for the obscurity of her career.

In contrast, from the 1960s revisionism and post-revisionism within historical writing, including on education, began to break down the barriers to the research of less powerful individuals and of female history. Especially from the 1980s this included the use of feminist and networking concepts. However, Gurney's work remained only a possible subject of investigation. The other reasons for its neglect held sway, continued to mislead educational historians, and maintained the gap in historical knowledge about her work. Nevertheless, although it has taken until 2021 for this study to appear it now fills that gap to a considerable extent using revisionist and post-revisionist approaches to assist that process. In particular, this historical study may be located with feminist historians' writings produced since the 1970s. That location is the study's context just as the neglect is its context.

## Historical neglect

## Trends

Harold Silver in the 1980s and the 1990s made a call to study neglected aspects of educational history, such as the content of schooling, its impact, and the educationalists involved in its delivery. Silver argued that in the main the frameworks behind education were written about, rather than education itself. In his view social structure and political process tended to dominate the writing on the subject and this was to the detriment of understanding. For him the nature of teaching and learning, and the people involved in them, were not adequately studied. Instead, these aspects were ignored in favour of a concentration on society's attitudes to schooling, on educational legislation, and on government administration by ministers such as James Kay-Shuttleworth, William Forster, and Robert Lowe. Silver asserted that statements of intention and policy needed to be disentangled from educational experiences. He highlighted the lack of research on neglected educationalists such as Leonard Horner and Mary Carpenter who were directly behind those experiences. He also alerted his readers to the changing nature of reputations over time and to the consequent periods of relative invisibility affecting historical subjects. The lack of recognition surrounding Gurney's career within educational historiography was in part a consequence of the situation Silver portrayed in his writing.<sup>1</sup>

In 1998 Richard Aldrich also highlighted the issues surrounding the role of the individual in that historiography. He recognised the restricting effect of the rise of

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<sup>1</sup> Silver, H. (1983) *Education as history*, London: Methuen, 17 - 34; Silver, H. (1992) 'Knowing and not knowing in the history of education', *History of Education*, 21, 1, 97 - 108; Prochaska, F. 'M. Carpenter', *ODNB*; Bartrip, P. 'L. Horner', *ODNB*

formal educational systems at national level on that role and its record. In addition, he wrote of the gender and class imbalance in the record of individuals' educational careers. Social and political frameworks were not the only limiting focal points. The neglect of Gurney's work was compounded by the tendency for historians to concentrate on male as opposed to female educationalists and on upper-class as opposed to middle-class and lower-class educational activity. In 2003 Aldrich considered the duties of educational historians. He considered the challenges facing them and their duty to the people of the past, as well as their duty to those of the present and to the truth. In considering the first duty Aldrich discussed the same inadequacies within educational historiography which he had discussed in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

In 2000 Gary McCulloch and William Richardson classified twentieth-century educational historiography of the English-speaking world into three phases. They were partly defined by the presence or absence of the characteristics identified by Silver and Aldrich.<sup>3</sup> Between the 1900s and the 1960s the whiggism of classical historiography channelled writing towards a national perspective which ranged across centuries. It also encouraged an emphasis on powerful men working in formal agencies and on progress in education. This whiggism tended to plot historical precedents as an aid to present-day practice in education. It also tended to leave out the educational work of women and that of the middle and lower classes. These exclusion patterns reflected those of historiography and of society in general. The neglect of Gurney's significant

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<sup>2</sup> Aldrich, R. (2006) *Lessons from the history of education: the selected works of Richard Aldrich*, London: Routledge, 79 - 89; Aldrich, R. (2003) 'The three duties of the historian of education', *History of Education*, 32, 2, 135

<sup>3</sup> McCulloch, G. and Richardson, W. (2000) *Historical research in educational settings*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 30 - 51

work was partly determined by the male-orientated profile of the Whig interpretation of history and partly determined by that interpretation's English class-consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

From the 1960s the classical approach was diluted by a revisionism which encouraged a greater appreciation of the formal and informal agencies behind education at the point of its transfer and of the reciprocal relationship between education and society. As part of this difference in thinking Silver and Aldrich voiced their criticisms about the lack of writing on the experience of educational recipients and on those who made those experiences possible across a daily basis. Their criticisms were underpinned by the idea that policy and practice were not necessarily the same. Also, revisionist historians of education and other topics were particularly encouraged by the writings of the sociologist Cecile Wright Mills to use perceptions from other disciplines, such as Marxism and feminism, as well as to see an understanding of history, biography, and society as interrelated.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, by the 1970s and 1980s feminist historians were expanding the nature of educational and of other historiography. Sheila Rowbotham's 1973 book was one of the first texts to advocate the analysis of past female activity using conceptual methodology. Among other early feminist historians were Olive Banks, Leonore Davidoff, Carol Dyhouse, Catherine Hall, June Purvis, and Jane Rendall.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Butterfield, H. (1931) *The Whig interpretation of history*, England: Bell

<sup>5</sup> Wright Mills, C. (1959) *The sociological imagination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6 and 143; McCulloch, G. and Watts, R. (2003) 'Introduction: theory, methodology and the history of education', *History of Education*, 32, 2, 129

<sup>6</sup> Rowbotham, S. (1973) *Hidden from history: 300 years of women's oppression and the fight against it*, London: Pluto Press; Gordon, A., Buhle, M. and Schrom Dye, N. (1976) 'The problem of women's history', Carroll, B. (ed.) *Liberating women's history*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 75 - 91; Banks, O. (1981) *Faces of feminism: a study of feminism as a social movement*, Oxford: Martin Robertson; Dyhouse, C. (1981) *Girls growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Purvis, J. (ed.), (1985) *The education of girls and women: proceedings of the 1984 annual conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain*, Leicester: History of Education Society; Rendall, J. (1985) *The Origins of modern feminism: women in Britain, France and the United States 1780 - 1860*, Houndmills: Macmillan; Davidoff, L. and Hall, C. (1987) *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780 - 1850*, London: Hutchinson; Wallach

McCulloch and Richardson also argued that by the last two decades of the twentieth century post-revisionism had drawn attention to the continuing limitations in educational historiography. The post-revisionists emphasized the need for further appreciation of the complex relationship between education and society, for the use of more diverse social science theories such as those connected to life-histories, geography, or networking, and for the use of a transnational perspective. In 2011 McCulloch continued to assess the trends in educational historiography.<sup>7</sup>

The feminist historians' use of biographical and prosopographical methodologies from the 1980s into the 2000s was encouraged by this post-revisionist thinking. For example, Joyce Pedersen, Ruth Watts, Sue Middleton, and Kathleen Weiler wrote about past women's lives using these methodologies, closely followed by Joyce Goodman, Jane Martin, and Sylvia Harrop. Collective biography was seen as a way to enhance an understanding of less known female educationalists' past careers. It was felt that by allowing their biographies to coalesce, patterns and variables across their experiences would be easier to identify.<sup>8</sup> In this search for a clearer focus the historians

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Scott, J. (1988) 'The problem of invisibility', Jay Kleinberg, S. (ed.) *Retrieving women's history: changing perceptions of the role of women in politics and society*, Oxford: Berg, 5 - 29; Purvi s, J. (1991) *A history of women's education in England*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press

<sup>7</sup> McCulloch, G. (2011) *The Struggle for the History of Education*, Oxon: Routledge

<sup>8</sup> Pedersen, J. (1981) 'Some Victorian headmistresses: a conservative tradition of social reform', *Victorian Studies*, 24, 4, 463 - 488; Pedersen, J. (1987) *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education in Victorian England: a study of elites and educational change*, New York and London: Garland Publishing; Middleton, S. (1993) *Educating feminists: life-histories and pedagogy*, New York: Teachers College Press; Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction'; Watts, 'From lady teacher to professional'; Weiler, K. and Middleton, S. (eds.), (1999). *Telling women's lives: narrative enquiries in the history of women's education*, Buckingham: Open University Press; Martin, J. (1999) *Women and the politics of schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Leicester: Leicester University Press; Hilton, M. and Hirsch, P. (eds.), (2000) *Practical visionaries: women, education and social progress 1790 - 1930*, Harlow: Pearson Education; Goodman, J. and Harrop, S. (eds.), (2000) *Women and educational policy-making and administration in England: authoritative women since 1800*, London: Routledge; Goodman, ' "Their market values" '; Goodman, 'Troubling histories'; Martin J. and Goodman, J. (2004) *Women and education 1800 - 1980*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Martin, J. (2010) *Making socialists: Mary Bridges Adams and the fight for knowledge and power, (1855 - 1939)*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*

also reflected upon and wrote about their use of this style of presentation.<sup>9</sup> In addition, with Peter Cunningham and Jane Read, these historians continued to develop the feminist approach to the history of education by applying to it the lenses of networking theory and geography. They analysed spatial as well as relational networking in transnational settings.<sup>10</sup>

Admittedly, prosopography has been used by historians since at least the nineteenth century. During the 1920s and 1930s Lewis Namier favoured its use, alongside his empirical approach with its emphasis on archival sources about individuals. This was in preference to a reliance on Whig and Marxist interpretations of the past. Its partial use by educational historians of progressivism can also be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. More pertinently, in 1987 Pedersen referred to the influence of Noel Annan's 1955 use of it on her appreciation of the bonding and networking that occurred amongst the reformers of female education. Of even more relevance to this thesis, Annan included a few members of the Gurney family within the group of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century networked English intelligentsia whom he named as the 'intellectual aristocracy'. However, he provided very little detail about those few members and did not include Mary Gurney among them.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Martin, 'Reflections'; Martin, 'The hope of biography'; Martin, J. (2007) 'Thinking education histories differently: biographical approaches to class politics and women's movements in London, 1900s to 1960s', *History of Education*, 36, 4 - 5, 515 - 533; Martin, 'Interpreting biography'

<sup>10</sup> Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*; Cunningham P. (2001) 'Innovators, networks and structures: towards a prosopography of progressivism', *History of Education*, 30, 5, 433 - 451; Read, J. (2003) 'Foebelian women: networking to promote professional status and educational change in the nineteenth century,' *History of Education*, 32, 1, 17 - 33; Milsom, Z. (2012) *Inter-war headmistresses: gender, identity and space-place*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Winchester

<sup>11</sup> Annan, N. (1999) *The Dons*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 304 - 341, 332 and 338; Stone, L. (1987) *The past and the present revisited*, London: Routledge, 45 - 46; Warren, J. (2004) *History and the historians*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 71 - 75; Cunningham 'Innovators, networks and structures', 435 - 437; Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 82

Within feminist historiography there was also a push to move beyond an emphasis on documentary evidence and to broaden empirical historical study by involving material and sensory remains. In 1985 Joan Burstyn suggested the use of the immersion technique of anthropologists' ethnography. She argued that historians could connect with the subjects under study by visiting where they existed. Kate Rousmaniere also wrote about the usefulness to historical research of examining place and space.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, as a sign of its influence, the development since the 1970s of feminist educational and other historiography was reviewed by Watts in 2005, by Purvis in 2018, by Lucy Bailey and Karen Graves in 2019, and by Goodman and Sue Anderson-Faithful in 2020. All of them saw how it had provided women's history and the history of education with an opportunity to expand and alter.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, due to what McCulloch and Richardson saw as the second and third phases in educational historiography, there were intellectual prompts and supports available to any investigation of Gurney's work. By the last three decades of the twentieth century the neglect of her career was open to erosion by new trends in historical

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<sup>12</sup> McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education*, 91; Burstyn, J. 'Sources of influence: women as teachers of girls', Purvis, *The education of girls and women*, 69; Rousmaniere, K. (2007) 'Go to the principal's office: toward a social history of the school principal in North America' *History of Education Quarterly*, 47, 1, 1 - 22

<sup>13</sup> Watts, R. (2005) 'Gendering the story: change in the history of education', *History of Education*, 34, 3, 241; Watts, R. (2005) 'Appendix: gender articles in *History of Education* since 1976', *History of Education*, 34, 6, 689 - 694; Purvis, J. (2018) '“A glass half full”? Women's history in the UK', *Women's History Review*, 27, 1, 92; Bailey, L. and Graves, K. (2019) 'Gendering the history of education', Rury, J. and Tamura, E. (eds.) *Oxford handbook of the history of education*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 355 - 371; Anderson-Faithful, S. and Goodman, J. (2020) 'Turns and twists in histories of women's education', *Women's History Review*, 29, 3, 363 - 376; Goodman, J. and Anderson-Faithful, S. (2020) 'Turning and twisting histories of women's education: matters of strategy', *Women's History Review*, 29, 3, 377 - 395; Goodman, J. and Anderson-Faithful, S. (2020) 'Afterword: turning and twisting histories of women's education: reading reflexively and diffractively', *Women's History Review*, 29, 3, 480 - 494

writing. However, in the short-term she was in an academic queue. The work of other Victorian female educationalists also awaited investigation, such as that of Caroline Bishop, Anne Jemima Clough, Alice Cooper, Edith Creak, Beata Doreck, and Reta Oldham. Indeed, while all of these women's work was the subject of scholarship in the last twenty years, Gurney's was not. Ironically, Cooper, Creak, and Oldham were under her control while they were headmistresses of the GST, a circumstance which adds to the relative importance of this thesis as a plug to the historiographical gap created by the neglect.<sup>14</sup>

## ii

### Choices

Apart from the outside trends in historical writing, the manner in which the GST chose to present its past and preserve its records helped to maintain the obscurity of Gurney's work across the twentieth century. Indeed, Gurney may have been involved in the first of the sequence of in-house choices which bolstered her obscurity. On the first page of the GSC's earliest general chronicle, published in 1900, there were images of only Grey, Stanley, and Shirreff as founders. It is likely that Gurney was this book's anonymous author, given that in 1907 and 1912 she was asked to create other records of the GST's development which revised and re-issued the 1900 one.<sup>15</sup>

Of more importance, it seems an opportunity was missed by the Trust to remember Gurney's work in the same way as that of Grey and Cavendish was remembered, through the naming of educational establishments such as the Maria Grey College in

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<sup>14</sup> Watts, 'From lady teacher to professional'; Sutherland, G. 'Anne Jemima Clough and Blanche Athena Clough: creating educational institutions for women', Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical visionaries*, 101 - 114; Read, 'Froebelian women'; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*

<sup>15</sup> Anon., (1900) *The high schools of the Girls' Public Day School Company, an illustrated history*, [London?]: [GPDSC?]; GDS6/4/4 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1907) 218; GDS6/4/6 (1<sup>st</sup> May 1912); GDS23/1/2 Publication relating to the GPDST, 1907; GDS23/1/3 Publication relating to the GPDST, 1912



London and Lucy Cavendish College in Cambridge. According to a GST chronicler, when it was proposed during the last years of Gurney's life that the Trust schools became known as Gurney schools one councillor opposed the idea by arguing that during her employment she must have created enemies.<sup>16</sup> Who or what was being protected was not made clear, but it shows how close Gurney's career came to a far greater place in the national collective memory than it was eventually afforded. Also, it appears no statue, plaque, or portrait was commissioned by the Trust to reside in one of their buildings during her life or soon after her death. There was a professional photograph of her taken in 1894 but this does not appear to have been connected to any decision on the part of her chief employer. Interestingly, even Gurney's tombstone hid her employment.<sup>17</sup> It was simply inscribed with the detail that she was the daughter of Joseph Gurney.<sup>18</sup> This was likely to have been her or her sister's choice but it compounded the effect of previous ones made within the GST.

Ironically, the GST's memory of Gurney's work was further weakened when in 1918 councillor Laurie Magnus took up the task of writing a memoir of her career. While he indicated that career's importance to the Trust, female education, and working women he did not provide enough detailed evidence to guarantee the attention of succeeding chroniclers. He lacked first-hand experience of her employment in the Company from the 1870s to the 1900s and he did not rectify this with research. At one point he made the deleterious claim that she was difficult to know, although he also made the contradictory statement that she was worth knowing. Indeed, he reflected his

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<sup>16</sup> Kamm, *Indicative past*, 121

<sup>17</sup> Employment is taken to mean a paid or unpaid occupation. It can be regular or irregular, take differing amounts of time, involve a diverse range of activities, and not always require a legal contract. See Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*

<sup>18</sup> Putney Vale Cemetery, London, block D3, plot 124

lack of knowledge in his choice of title: *Mary Gurney, an impression and a tribute*. Moreover, in his 1923 general survey of the Trust's past he again did not provide the proof needed to ensure future interest. Instead, he chose to say that it was difficult to do her work justice, which is as vague as it is complimentary.<sup>19</sup>

The missed opportunity of 1918 to fully clarify Gurney's place in GST history need not have occurred. Initially the Council asked Edith Hastings, the first headmistress of Wimbledon High School, to write the memoir. She had been a close colleague of Gurney since the 1870s. However, although Amelia Gurney collated relevant facts about her sister's life for use in the memoir, Hastings felt incapable of producing it and declined. Three others were then asked. 'Miss Paul', another retired Trust headmistress, declined on the grounds of ill-health. 'Miss Home', still in place as a Trust headmistress, and Constance Jones, the retired Mistress of GC, also declined with no reasons recorded. Paul and Home, as in the case of Magnus, would also have lacked first-hand knowledge as both were born in the 1870s, unlike Constance Jones who was a near contemporary of Gurney. However, she did not work with Gurney at the Trust and their association at Girton was inadequate as the basis of a memoir. Hastings' recollections were a key to the survival of Gurney's status as an important educationalist and her self-doubt lost historians a vital source.<sup>20</sup>

Admittedly, Magnus was put at a disadvantage by Gurney living longer than many of those she worked with closely in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, particularly the original councillors of the Company. If alive in 1918 and 1923, they could have encouraged him to use the detailed minutes of past meetings to produce a substantial and convincing account of her work. Nor was he guided by the age

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<sup>19</sup> Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 1; Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 41

<sup>20</sup> GDS6/3/1/6 (21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1917, 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1917, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1918, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1918) 38 - 66

differences of the four female founders to investigate Gurney's relative importance. Born in 1836, Gurney was the youngest, while the three other women were a generation older. They were all born between 1807 and 1816. After 1872 this relative youth gave her the advantage of more time as a leader of the organisation. Magnus failed to appreciate that the other women were unable to offer such service for so long. Stanley died in 1895. Shirreff and Grey died in 1897 and 1906 respectively, although ill-health had held them back from the workload Gurney shouldered even in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>21</sup>

The next publications about the GST's past also built on the neglect of Gurney's importance, a neglect begun in 1900 and exacerbated by Magnus. From the 1930s to the 1970s a swathe of commemorations appeared about the high schools but Gurney's key role in their creation and survival for 45 years remained undeveloped. The female authors did not go far beyond naming her as the fourth founder. In some instances this did not occur at all. In the 1933 publication about Tunbridge Wells High School only Grey was named as a founder. In the 1960 history of Putney High School Gurney was named as a Company founder but her contribution to that school was briefly acknowledged as only due to her residence in its locality and her gift of two tennis courts. In a 1973 book on Notting Hill and Ealing High School Gurney was very briefly quoted but her governance of 28 schools was mentioned without detail.<sup>22</sup> In addition, this historiographical pattern affected the 1960 general account by Kathleen Littlewood. In the foreword the Council chairman of the day gave his opinion that the

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<sup>21</sup> Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 26 - 31

<sup>22</sup> Anon., (1933) *Tunbridge Wells High School (1883 - 1933)*, [London?]: [GPDST?]; Pike, M. (1960) *The oak tree: the story of Putney High School 1893 - 1960*, Brighton: [GPDST?], 1 - 24; Sayers, J. (1973) *The fountain unsealed, a history of the Notting Hill and Ealing High School*, Hertfordshire: The Broadwater Press, 9 - 10

history of the Company in the years after its foundation, when Gurney's leadership reached a peak, was less interesting.<sup>23</sup>

It is worth remarking that Kay-Shuttleworth, Payne, Bartley, and Roundell also suffered neglect in the schools' commemorations of the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, this trend was reflected as early as 1923 in the jubilee prayer. That they were rarely named or their work explained, suggests that the mainly female authors exercised a degree of gender discrimination as well as inaccuracy. Overall, the commemorations illustrated how an incomplete Trust history was fostered, repeated and cemented into readers' minds across time.

In the 1979 general record, the author, Josephine Kamm, admitted that she knew very much less about Gurney than about the other three founders, although she acknowledged that Gurney's foresight and persistence was key to the development of a country-wide group of high schools. However, as in the case of Magnus and Littlewood, she did not feel impelled to fill the gap in her knowledge through some in-depth research and then raise Gurney's profile through subsequent writing. Consequently, fewer than twenty references to Gurney were made in the publication. Indeed, Kamm went further than neglect, and belittled Gurney's work. She cited the view that by the 1900s Gurney was seen as an elderly, though active, lady who entertained headmistresses to tea and occasionally appeared on the platform at prize-giving ceremonies. Instead of contradicting this very limited and stereotypical view, Kamm cultivated it. A more accurate view would have been that by the 1900s Gurney was at the peak of her powers within the GST as chairman of the dominant Education

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<sup>23</sup> Littlewood, K. (1960) *Some account of the history of the Girls' Public Day School Trust*, [London?]: [GPDST?]

Committee. Also, some of the other references were irrelevancies about Gurney's physical appearance.

Judgements about her appearance had begun in the memorials of 1918. Constance Jones referred to Gurney's aquiline features, her dark eyes, and her striking presence. Magnus cited more of his colleague's recollections. This time of the younger Gurney with her striking and strong face, her remarkable brown eyes, and her imposing figure. However, while Kamm was not the only chronicler to comment on Gurney's facial features, she was the most controversial. She wrote of her as far from beautiful and making up in intelligence what she lacked in beauty. These judgements reflected the general approach of society to female appearance in the years they were written. They did not add to an understanding of Gurney's role in female education.<sup>24</sup>

Gurney's work fared no better in the Trust's and the AHM's centenary publications. In the former she was once again simply identified as a founder of the organisation and as one of the great pioneers of female education, but there was no detail to back these claims. In the latter she was not named at all, despite her key role in appointing many of the AHM's headmistresses to their first and later posts. Gurney's centralised and uniform control of the Trust's high schools, including their staff, was not appreciated. Instead the authors argued that there was a lack of regimentation across the schools of the AHM. While this may have been correct for non-Trust high schools it was not so for the 38 under Gurney's watch.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Kamm, *Indicative past*, 23, 36, 63, 93

<sup>25</sup> Sondheimer, J. and Bodington, P. (1972) *The GPDST 1872 - 1972, a centenary review*, London: [GPDST?], 5, 79; Glenday, N. and Price, M. (1974) *Reluctant revolutionaries, a century of headmistresses*, London: Pitman, 37

Lastly, before the twenty-first century, the inadequacies of the GST's chronicles were not helped by the lack of suitable storage for the Trust's documentary records and an effective catalogue to assist research into them. Only in the new century was the choice made to ensure that most of those records became easily accessible to historians in one appropriate and organised place.

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'of few words'<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, Gurney's personal circumstances may also have contributed to the neglect shown to her career by a record of public service unconnected to the GST and begun in the late nineteenth century: the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Gurney moved within an educational network which had a strong aristocratic character but she was not born into the English upper-class establishment. Instead she was a member of a middle-class family involved in professional business. In marked contrast, Grey's husband and Shirreff's brother-in-law was the nephew of the prime-minister Earl Grey. Stanley's father was Viscount Dillon and her husband was Baron Stanley of Alderley. Moreover, Cavendish was the daughter of Lord Lyttelton and wife of Lord Frederick Cavendish. These women's educational work rates were no greater than Gurney's and sometimes smaller, yet they were included in the *DNB* by the 1920s and Gurney was not. Interestingly, neither was Buss, whose family were also without aristocratic titles and high government posts but instead in business. Gurney's most influential relative was Russell Gurney, a member of the House of Commons rather than the House of Lords.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ridley, *Buss*, 19

<sup>27</sup> Stephen, L. and Lee, S. (eds.), (1973) *Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Fenwick, G. (1994) *Women and the Dictionary of National Biography: a guide to*

Even when the *DNB* attempted to avoid fault-lines based on class and gender, it was still affected by a tendency to rely on the inclusion of only a few women whose work sufficed as examples of that of great reformers. The inclusion of Shirreff, Grey, Davies, and of Dorothea Beale, first Lady Principal of CLC, in the *DNB*'s 1897, 1912, and 1927 editions reduced the necessity of including Gurney and Buss at some point, especially if greater research was required for their inclusion. Instead, the work of those included was interpreted using the lens of statesmanship, an interpretation made more obvious by the inclusion of Stanley and Cavendish as part of their husbands' entries. Anthony John Mundella, MP and head of the government's Education Department in the 1880s, also fell back on this tendency when he wrote about the Froebelian movement in England in an 1892 publication known as *Child Life*. He concluded that the Shirreff sisters had achieved more than any statesman for the cause of education.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Gurney published relatively little on education in comparison to that published by Grey, Shirreff, Beale, and Davies. Mostly Gurney immersed herself in the provision of female education rather than in commentary about it. This choice made her less obvious. In addition, Gurney's lack of a distinctive academic qualification, such as that held by the contemporary educationalist Doctor Sophie Bryant, also meant there was no other clear indication of Gurney's remarkable career to pique a fuller interest among researchers. Moreover, there was no prompt for research from the equivalent of Blanche Clough's biography of her aunt Anne Jemima

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*Dictionary of National Biography volumes 1885 - 1985 and missing persons*, Aldershot: Scolar Press; Matthew, H. 'F. Cavendish', *ODNB*; Curthoys, M. 'R. Gurney', *ODNB*

<sup>28</sup> Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 221; Spain J. 'A. J. Mundella', *ODNB*

Clough or Ellen Mary Gurney's edition of letters by her aunt Emelia Batten Gurney. Even a 1902 Gurney family history failed to mention Gurney's career.<sup>29</sup>

Another explanation for Gurney's historical anonymity was her own self-effacement. Magnus hinted at this when he suggested that she was difficult to know. So did Ridley when she wrote that Gurney was a woman of few words. That it was Gurney who probably chose anonymity in 1900 when the first history of the Trust was published lent credence to these views.<sup>30</sup> Firmer proof of Gurney's reluctance to accept public scrutiny was shown in her letter to the feminist Helen Taylor, John Stuart Mill's step-daughter, about Taylor's potential election to the London School Board. She wrote: 'I am sorry to say that I am quite unable to be of use to you by speaking at public meetings, as I have had no practice at all in speaking'.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, she was prepared to put her name to publications and some letters to the press, as well as make an appearance before the Bryce Commission, when she felt such excursions into the public arena were essential. There appears to have been a tension in Gurney between a desire for an understanding of her work and a desire to avoid personal distinction. Her supportive network of reformers may have assisted the latter. Her work not only gained from it a safety-net, it gained a place of disguise. Webs can hide as well as protect activity. Overall, Gurney was to an extent complicit in her own career's neglect.

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<sup>29</sup> Clough, B. (1897) *A memoir of Anne Jemima Clough*, London: E Arnold; Gurney, E. M. (1902) *The letters of Emelia Russell Gurney*, London: James Nesbit; Gurney, W. B. and W. Salter (1902) *Some particulars of the lives of William Brodie Gurney and his immediate ancestors*, London: Unwin Brothers; Fletcher, S. 'S. Bryant', *ODNB*; Sutherland, G. 'A. J. Clough', *ODNB*; Sutherland, G. 'B. A. Clough', *ODNB*; Morse, E. 'E. R. Gurney', *ODNB*

<sup>30</sup> Anon., *The high schools*; Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 1

<sup>31</sup> Women's Library, Mill - Taylor Collection XV, Letter from M. Gurney to H. Taylor (6<sup>th</sup> Nov. [1876?]); Levine, P. 'H. Taylor', *ODNB*; Harris, J. 'J. S. Mill', *ODNB*



## Repeating the pattern

Despite the pressures of revisionism, due to the other factors still in play Gurney's career remained neglected by professional historians while other educationalists' careers were addressed. Most of the very infrequent references to it were no more than a few lines long. There were only two brief mentions in Margaret Bryant's 1979 book on female education and only three in her 1986 book on London's education, with two of those three in the footnotes. Yet both books were particularly appropriate vehicles in which to include far more on Gurney's work.<sup>32</sup> Another example of a suitable place for some detailed analysis was Pedersen's book of 1987. Instead, her dozen brief references to Gurney's career continued the pattern of neglect, despite the declaration that out of the unwieldy legion of organizers who created the middle-class female education system only those individuals who played particularly prominent parts were included in her book.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Ellsworth made only half a dozen short comments on her career in his 1979 publication on Gurney's close colleagues. Admittedly, he placed Gurney in the company of Beale, Davies, and Mary Carpenter as one of four women who were already activists when they came into contact with the Shirreff sisters at meetings of the NAPSS. He also acknowledged her as one of the founders of the WEU and of the FS. In addition, he included Gurney in the middle of a list of five women connected to the TTRS whom he classified as pre-eminent in their support of female education.

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<sup>32</sup> Bryant, M. (1979) *The unexpected revolution, a study in the history of the education of women and girls in the nineteenth century*, University of London Institute of Education, 102; Bryant, M. (1986) *The London experience of secondary education*, London: Athlone Press, 330, 486, footnotes 44, 50

<sup>33</sup> Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 63

Buss, Grey, Shirreff, and Jane Chessar were the others. However, his references lacked detail and, remarkably, he failed to include Gurney in a discussion about the creation and work of the GSC. That omission in particular demonstrated how little he really knew about her career.<sup>34</sup>

The first attempt to detail Gurney's prominence came in my 1993 dissertation on her and the Lawrence sisters who founded Roedean School in England. Goodman's 1997 article on women involved in the Bryce Commission also provided some more light on Gurney's thinking and influence. Sondheimer's brief *ODNB* summary followed in 2004.<sup>35</sup>

However, Martin in her 1999 publication on female education omitted Gurney as the fourth founder of the GST. Goodman and Harrop in an essay on governing women in middle-class girls' schools, published in 2000, only mentioned her once. In two other books of 2000 and 2014 which sought to continue the recovery of female educationalists' careers she was not mentioned at all.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the first of those two prosopographies revealed another historiographical pattern which affected Gurney's career. Using contemporary memoirs it demonstrated that its female subjects were household names in their local communities during their lives, with several of them also national and international figures, but this fame only lasted for a time after their deaths. Gurney's reputation suffered the same diminution as time passed.<sup>37</sup> Another

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<sup>34</sup> Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 107, 216, 221

<sup>35</sup> Campbell-Day under the name of Camillin, *The 'active workers'*; Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction'

<sup>36</sup> Martin, *Women and the politics of schooling*, 66; Goodman, J. and Harrop, S. 'Governing ladies: women governors of middle-class girls' schools, 1870 - 1925', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 42; Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical visionaries*; Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*

<sup>37</sup> Hilton, M. '“Child of reason”: Anna Barbauld and the origins of progressive pedagogy', Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical visionaries*, 38, footnotes 3, 35; Watts, R. 'Mary Carpenter: educator of the children of the perishing and dangerous classes', Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical visionaries*, 50,

opportunity to reverse some of the neglect came in the early 2000s, yet Rosemary Thynne's Ph.D. thesis about high school girls did not examine her effect on the academic culture of the GST's schools. Instead, again only a few references were made to Gurney's foundation role and some were in the footnotes. Sayaka Nakagomi's 2016 Ph.D. thesis on domestic subjects within the high schools also left Gurney's work in the shadows. Grey and Sheriff were seen as 'more active' than Gurney in the campaign to establish such schools.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, slight inaccuracies reflected Gurney's degree of historical anonymity. Goodman's 1997 article referred to her as Maria Gurney, as did a 1987 collection of primary sources which attributed her 1872 pamphlet to Maria Gurney. Furthermore, in another collection of 2007 that pamphlet, which was the second of three in a WEU series of that year, was not included, although the others by Grey and Shirreff were included together. Instead, Gurney's 1871 paper from the *Englishwoman's Review* was used but elsewhere in the collection. Unlike the Victorian style of presentation, this choice failed to identify her work as equal to that of Grey and Shirreff.<sup>39</sup>

Lastly, the destruction, sometime after 1993, of three volumes of over 600 newspaper cuttings about female education, compiled and indexed in manuscript by Gurney with help from her sister Amelia, was not only an indication of the continuing low esteem in which her educational work was generally regarded, it contributed to that neglect. These volumes were held in the Trust's head office until at least that year,

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footnotes 2, 3, 13; Sutherland, 'Anne Jemima Clough', Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical visionaries*, 113, footnote 10

<sup>38</sup> Thynne, R. (2005) *The girls' high schools 1872 - 1914 and the shaping of a new generation of middle class girls*, Ph.D. thesis, Royal Holloway College, University of London; Nakagomi, S. (2016) *English middle-class girls' high schools and 'domestic subjects' 1871 - 1914*, Ph.D. thesis, University College London Institute of Education, 27

<sup>39</sup> Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction', 287, 295; Spender, D. (ed.), (1987) *The education papers: women's quest for equality in Britain 1850 - 1912*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Hamilton and Schroeder, *Nineteenth-century British women's education*

now only some separate pages with their attached cuttings remain within the GDS papers at UCL IOE.<sup>40</sup>

For a diverse combination of reasons Gurney was in sight but out of focus to historians since the 1920s. This positioning forms the context of the thesis. It left Gurney with an under-stated role in the history of female education and therefore others, such as Grey and Davies, with over-stated roles. The revisionist and post-revisionist use of feminist and networking concepts also forms its context. This thesis uses some of those ideas as clarifying lenses when it attempts to fill the gap in knowledge about Gurney's work, especially as they can be brought together in an appreciation of her feminist networking. Nevertheless, it also recognises the controversies surrounding the use of those ideas. Those debates inform as well as encourage its analysis of Gurney's work.

## 2

### Feminist controversies

#### i

#### Warnings

In 1985 Purvis categorised female educational history into three types: narrative, analytical, and feminist. As an example she judged Sheila Fletcher's 1980 book on endowed schools for girls to have been written using a non-feminist, albeit analytical, approach. Purvis argued that feminist research was essentially a reflexive exercise in which insights from one's own experience help an interpretation of the past. In the same publication Burstyn declared her support for the use in historical writing of ideas

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<sup>40</sup> Gurney, M. (ed.), (1874) signed and dated album of press cuttings with index, 1871 - 1875; Gurney, M. (ed.), album of press cuttings with index, 1877 - 1902; Gurney, M. (ed.), (1882) signed and dated album of press cuttings, 1878 - 1903, GPDST archive (1993)

on the changing nature of gender roles across time.<sup>41</sup> Martin in her 2001 to 2012 articles on the biographical approach also recognised that this reflexive thinking could aid historical study. Although, citing the work of the sociologist Liz Stanley, she drew attention to the challenge of auto/biography when writers' own histories infiltrated into the construction of past lives and in 2000 McCulloch and Richardson warned that an excess of reflexion could lead to narcissism.<sup>42</sup> In addition, in 2003 Goodman warned feminist historians about applying a theory without questioning its suitability as a framework for historical analysis. It may be found wanting or irrelevant when it comes into contact with historical evidence. Moreover, a theory's relevance needs to be continually re-assessed as more evidence comes to light.<sup>43</sup>

For example, in 1997 Goodman made a comparative analysis of the spoken evidence given by Gurney and the chairman of the GSC's Council, William Stone, to the Bryce Commission. She appears to have been guided by the theory that in mixed-sex professional meetings women tend to be over-shadowed by the men present.<sup>44</sup> Judging by the evidence, Goodman was justified in her belief that the theory was a valid one to apply to Gurney's experience before that commission. However, it would be a mistake to apply the theory to all of Gurney's professional life and indeed, heeding her own warning, Goodman did not do this. There is evidence which indicates

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<sup>41</sup> Fletcher, S. (1980) *Feminists and bureaucrats: a study in the development of girls' education in the nineteenth century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Purvis, J. 'A feminist perspective on the history of women's education', Purvis, *The education of girls and women*, 7 - 8; Burstyn, 'Sources of influence', 73

<sup>42</sup> Martin, 'Reflections', 166 - 167; Martin, 'The hope of biography', 220 - 221; Martin, 'Thinking education histories differently', 517; Martin, 'Interpreting biography' 93 - 94; McCulloch and Richardson, *Historical Research*, 17

<sup>43</sup> Goodman, 'Troubling histories' 157 - 158

<sup>44</sup> Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction', 294 - 295

that in many other mixed-sex meetings of the 1890s Gurney was an influential and at times dominant character.<sup>45</sup>

It was Margaret Bryant who made one of the earliest warnings against indiscriminate use of the theoretical turn by feminist historians of education. In 1979 and 1985 she argued strongly that the use of present-minded theories could distort an understanding of the past, make it unhistorical, and she only accepted that a conceptual framework could assist an enquiry if it were constructed and modified by that enquiry.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, Bryant echoed Emily Davies' warning, which had also been quoted in Barbara Stephen's 1927 book on the reformer: 'If you will state the facts that is just what is wanted. I only hope the speakers on our side won't go off, as our enemies always do, into theories. It is dreadfully unsafe'.<sup>47</sup> That caution over theories was shared by a fellow reformer, Frances Power Cobbe. Bryant also echoed her 1869 words on the topic: 'Of all the theories current concerning women, none is more curious than the theory that it is needful to make a theory about them.'<sup>48</sup>

More controversially, Bryant also warned against the use of theory if it led to women's history becoming isolated and unwillingly to take account of the wider historical context.<sup>49</sup> She was concerned about reflexive historical writing, so it may have been irony rather than coincidence that she named her 1985 essay in part, 'Reflections'. In it she asked for the educational history of the middle-class female to be studied alongside that of the middle-class male, instead of by itself and through the

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<sup>45</sup> For examples and analysis of Gurney's exercise of power in mixed-sex professional meetings see chapter 4.4 - 6 and chapter 6.2 - 4

<sup>46</sup> Bryant, M. 'Reflections on the nature of the education of women and girls', Purvis, *The education of girls and women*, 23 - 24; Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 116 and 119

<sup>47</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 83 - 84

<sup>48</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 23

<sup>49</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 116

lens of feminism. She argued that the Victorian reformers had seen both fields of education as requiring improvement, and consequently had worked for them together as part of what was known as the middle-class education question. Seeming to recognise that the effect of a lens can limit as well as extend, she called for the imitation of those reformers' vision and method.<sup>50</sup>

ii

Victorian feminism

In particular, in 1979 Bryant argued against Sara Delamont's 1978 feminist interpretation that educated Victorian females suffered from a double conformity snare, a bind that required them to be feminine in the home and masculine in a place of academic study. This was seen by Delamont as a result of the belief in separate spheres for men and women. Bryant proposed that this twentieth-century perception was probably not what it felt like in the nineteenth century. Rather, places of Victorian secondary and tertiary female education allowed for femininity, were home-like, and therefore the snare did not develop. Bryant also proposed that any conformity was not seen by many as a restrictive challenge but instead as a supportive freedom.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, in 1987 Felicity Hunt supported Delamont's theory by highlighting the view of Sara Burstall, a past educationalist, that within English society there were many who helped to foster the divided role for women with its bind of double conformity.<sup>52</sup> In the same work Dyhouse also argued that there was another mistaken incompatibility

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<sup>50</sup> Bryant, 'Reflections', 23 - 24

<sup>51</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 119; Delamont, S. 'The contradictions in ladies' education', Delamont S. and Duffin, L. (eds.), (1978) *The nineteenth-century woman: her cultural and physical world*, London: Croom Helm, 140

<sup>52</sup> Hunt, F. 'Divided aims: the educational implications of opposing ideologies in girls' secondary schooling, 1850 - 1940', Hunt, F. (ed.), (1987) *Lessons for life: the schooling of girls and women, 1850-1950*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 16; Delamont, S. 'S. Burstall', *ODNB*

in the Victorian era's thinking: that femininity and authority, like femininity and academic education, could not be combined.<sup>53</sup>

The controversy returned in 1996 when Majorie Theobald agreed with Bryant. She argued that the idea of Victorian women facing a double conformity snare was too much like presentism and did not fit with the evidence.<sup>54</sup> In more recent years the development of the concept of a feminine public sphere has added nuance to this debate. For instance, it was used by Megan Smitley in 2009.<sup>55</sup> The concept carries with it the view that Victorian women did face the challenge of operating in two separate spheres. However, this was less of a bind than some have argued as the women were, to an extent, able to control the nature of their public sphere and turn it more into a safe borderland.

In 2000 another feminist perspective lay behind Goodman's and Harrop's reconceptualisation of past female educational leadership. They included the category of middle level policy-making and administration within their definition of a leadership role. They wrote about the women who led at this level in the nineteenth century, such as those on local school boards or who became educational governors. Nevertheless, they did not exclude from their study the less numerous women who led at a higher level in the twentieth century, such as those who became ministers of education. The two historians credited Hunt with the identification of this middle-level leadership as organisational policy-making. They argued its micro-powers were

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<sup>53</sup> Dyhouse, C. 'Miss Buss and Miss Beale: gender and authority in the history of education', Hunt, *Lessons for life*, 23

<sup>54</sup> McCulloch and Richardson, *Historical research*, 64

<sup>55</sup> Smitley, M. (2009) *The feminine public sphere: middle-class women and civic life in Scotland, c. 1870 - 1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press



important because these powers transformed educational aims into the staffing, the examination systems, the curricula, and other crucial aspects of education.<sup>56</sup>

Other feminist definitions of past female educationalists were formulated before that of Hunt. In 1978 the women were categorised by Delamont into two groups. The more conservative were classified as separatists, as they sought improvements in women's conditions but accepted the idea that women had an unequal role within society to that of men. Others were classified as the uncompromising. As well as improved conditions, they sought what was called the cardinal principle: equality with men.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, in 2000 Martin further identified women reformers of the past. She saw some of them as more radical feminists who worked in a revolutionary manner to restructure their society's dominant class divisions. Or, she saw them as more muted liberal feminists who sought equality and improvements through an evolutionary process. The less revolutionary feminists were also called femocrats in Australian and New Zealand scholarship.<sup>58</sup>

The dichotomy of a nineteenth-century feminist r/evolution created debate not only among the historians, but also among the earlier feminist writers they categorised. This ambiguity was possibly begun by Constance Jones when she wrote in the preface of Davies's 1910 book about the reform of female education: 'a revolution carried through so quietly and irresistibly [sic], that now as we look back, it is seen to exhibit the essential characteristics of a true evolution'.<sup>59</sup> Lastly, it should not be forgotten

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<sup>56</sup> Goodman, J. and Harrop, S. ' "Within marked boundaries": women and educational policy since 1800', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 2 - 3; Goodman, J. 'Women school board members and women school managers: the structuring of educational authority in Manchester and Liverpool, 1870 - 1903', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 62

<sup>57</sup> Delamont, 'The contradictions', 154; Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 87

<sup>58</sup> Martin, J. ' "Women not wanted": the fight to secure political representation on local education authorities, 1870 - 1907', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 83 - 84

<sup>59</sup> Quoted by Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 106

that the earlier writers could have applied the term feminist to themselves, given that it was in use in England by the middle of the nineteenth century, as well as distinguished their feminism from that of others using different categories than those used by the historians.<sup>60</sup>

iii

### Middle-class feminists

In contrast to the controversies which centred on how far feminism should be used as a methodology and on the nature of nineteenth-century feminism, there was a debate which questioned feminism's degree of importance to Victorian educational reform.

Between 1979 and 1987 Bryant, Dyhouse, Pedersen and Deborah Gorham all agreed that while feminism was part of the motivation of Victorian educational reformers, the prime motivation of the majority of them was the protection and enhancement of their class status. Indeed, it was felt unlikely that they would have achieved the creation of a body of high schools and female colleges across England if feminist ambitions had been dominant, as the campaign to create them needed the support of middle and upper-class men. It was argued that the men had the expertise and power which female reformers lacked but the men would not have wanted to be associated with a feminism which placed gender concerns higher than class concerns. The cultivation of the right sort of useful men by Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was used as an example of this class-based strategy.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Simpson, J. and Weiner, E. (eds.) (1989) *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) (last accessed Dec. 2016)

<sup>61</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 28 - 29, 41, 85; Dyhouse, *Girls growing up*, 57, 141- 143; Elston, M. 'E. G. Anderson', *ODNB*

Also, the SIC's observation in the 1860s that the professionals had nothing to look to but education to keep their sons at a high social status was applied by Pedersen to their daughters. Nineteenth-century commentaries on what was known as the woman question by Power Cobbe, Jessie Boucherett, Bessie Rayner Parkes, and William Greg were used by her and Gorham to highlight the Victorian middle-class's fear of the growth in penury among unmarried females of their rank if they remained uneducated and its fear that middle-class culture would diminish across the generations if the mothers of their rank remained leisured and untrained. For many Victorians it seemed that these class-based fears superseded their feminist concerns.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, feminist historians believed that the strategy of cultivating those considered the right sort of useful men brought with it negative as well as positive consequences. In 1981 Dyhouse argued that it meant a degree of control was lost by women over the governing bodies of the new high schools, however enlightened the men were or however assertive the women were. Similarly, in 2014 Tanya Fitzgerald accepted the importance of middle-class men in the reform of female education but reminded her readers that the wider vision of some female activists was not necessarily shared by those men.<sup>63</sup>

More specifically, male-orientated bureaucratisation was identified by Goodman and Hunt in 1987 and again by Goodman and Harrop in 2000, as one of the negative consequences. They argued that when more formal procedures were adopted in the administration of schools and colleges there was a tendency for some regression in the authority of middle-class females until it had re-asserted itself through professional

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<sup>62</sup> Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 11, 27 - 33; Gorham, D. 'The ideology of femininity and reading for girls, 1850 - 1914', Hunt, *Lessons for life*, 51

<sup>63</sup> Dyhouse, *Girls growing up*, 60; Fitzgerald, T. 'Networks of influence: home scientists at the University of New Zealand 1911 - 1941', Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 41

development. Hunt highlighted as an example the introduction of the 1904 Regulations for Secondary Schools. Through the regulations Robert Morant, permanent secretary at the Board of Education, undermined the high schools' resistance to the demand for increased domestic science teaching in their curriculum created by the Social Darwinism of the Edwardian era.<sup>64</sup> However, Gurney's exercise of authority did not always follow this pattern. Instead at times she successfully resisted temporary losses of power by changing the focus of her work or by overcoming challenges to her exercise of responsibility.<sup>65</sup> At other times her professionalism kept pace with changes through her own development of bureaucracy.<sup>66</sup> Here is another example of how a theory needs to be treated with caution.

Overall, the feminist lens made an important, if controversial, contribution to the historiography of female education before and after Purvis's 1989 notable defence of it.<sup>67</sup> This thesis sits within that context. Indeed, the use of feminist theory was even debated by the past reformers Davies, Power Cobbe, and Constance Jones as they struggled to understand the effects of their actions and compose their own history.

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<sup>64</sup> Goodman, 'Constructing contradictions'; Hunt, 'Divided aims', 8 - 12, 196, footnotes 20, 41; Goodman, J. 'Women governors and the management of working-class schools', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 30 - 31; Goodman, 'Women school board members', 73; Goodman, J. and Harrop, S. '“The peculiar preserve of the male kind”: women and the education inspectorate, 1893 to the Second World War', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 141 - 143; Fry G. 'R. Morant', *ODNB*

<sup>65</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1972) 1; *Freeman's Journal* (23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1872) Dublin; GDS3/3/2 (27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1877) 297 - 298; GDS3/2/4 and 6 Printed resolutions opposing reorganisation (4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1897); for more references to Gurney manoeuvring around the challenges see chapter 4.5, chapter 6.2.i, and chapter 6.3.i

<sup>66</sup> For examples of Gurney's use of bureaucratisation to enhance her own power within the GST see chapter 4.4.iv and chapter 6.2.ii

<sup>67</sup> Purvis, J. (1989) '“We can no longer pretend that sex stratification does not exist, nor that it exists but is unimportant”, (M. Eichler). A reply to Keith Flett', *History of Education*, 18, 2, 147 - 152

## Network theory

## i

## Networking concepts

The use of networking theory as an analytical tool by feminist writers of the post-classical phase in educational historiography also forms the context of this thesis.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore it is important to understand the development of that use.

In 2007 Eckhardt Fuchs advocated the application of networking concepts identified by other disciplines such as political science, anthropology, and economics when considering educational history. For example, he accepted the ideas that networks are non-hierarchical relationships which provide social capital in the form of access and which are undermined by bureaucratic professionalism. Furthermore, Fuchs urged educational historians to go beyond mere description and measure historical networking using diagrams as well as prose, particularly in prosopography which by its nature can ease the analysis of networking.<sup>69</sup> This thesis primarily uses prose when measuring the density and intensity of Gurney's network and networking opportunities but tables, maps, and a web format are also used to demonstrate those measurements.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Watts, R. (1980) 'The Unitarian contribution to the development of female education 1790 - 1850,' *History of Education*, 9, 4, 273 - 286; Watts, R. (1998) *Gender, power and the Unitarians in England 1760 - 1860*, Essex: Addison Wesley Longman; Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*; Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*; Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical visionaries*; Cunningham, 'Innovators, networks and structures'; Read, 'Froebelian women'; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*; Milsom, *Inter-war headmistresses*; Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*

<sup>69</sup> Fuchs, E. (2007) 'Networks and the history of education', *Paedagogica Historica*, 43, 2, 187, 191 - 192

<sup>70</sup> See the end of chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6

## Feminist networking

Many years before Fuchs' 2007 advocacy, networking concepts were used by feminist historians of education. In 1985 Burstyn, guided by C. Houle's study of intellectual development, recognised that networking concepts such as scholarly companionship, mentoring, and voluntary groupings were important to any past learning which took place outside of institutions.<sup>71</sup> These concepts assist an understanding of how Gurney became and remained a female educationalist with little formal schooling and no professional training. She did not rely solely on the self-direction of the autodidact. She experienced learning through scholarly companionship as well as mentoring in her home and she underwent training through voluntary groupings in her work-places.<sup>72</sup>

Also, in 1987 Pedersen used the networking concept of sponsored mobility, developed by R. Turner in 1960, to understand how it was that headmistresses of the high schools were selected. She did qualify her use by warning that it was not fully exemplified in practice. Nevertheless, instead of seeing the more open competition of contested mobility behind most promotion, Pedersen argued that sponsored mobility was the more prevalent type of employment mobility in reformed English schools for girls. This involved networking from an early stage in a headmistress' career.<sup>73</sup> In addition, Pedersen used the networking concept of closure, developed by A. Carr-Saunders and P. Wilson, to help understand the processes used to cultivate an image and a practice of female professionalism. With a similar purpose, in 2002 Goodman

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<sup>71</sup> Burstyn, 'Sources of influence', 69 - 73.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from C. Gurney to E. Hastings (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922) Wimbledon High School archive (1993); also see chapter 3.4.iii

<sup>73</sup> Pedersen, *The reform of*, 226, 436, footnote 77

referred to the ideas of M. Savage on networking's closure characteristic.<sup>74</sup> These concepts assist the identification of patterns within Gurney's recruitment of headmistresses. She used sponsored mobility and closure to recruit, retain, and control those who reached the professional calibre she felt was required in the GST schools.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, in their work of 2012 and 2014 on past headmistresses' careers, Goodman and Zoe Milsom, used Doreen Massey's 1994 idea that a network may be understood as a spatial construct as well as a relational one. Massey argued that networked spaces, as in the case of networked relationships, have moveable boundaries because they are always under construction and facing challenge.<sup>76</sup> Feminist historians of education also used Morwenna Griffith's 1995 theory that a network is a webbed space which provides its members with a degree of safety and agency surrounding self-identity and group-identity. Thus past female networks were used to deflect pejorative views, such as those on spinsterhood, by providing safe borderlands in which to replace those views. Women were able to constantly develop and perform within them altered gender, age, educational, and professional profiles.<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, in 1979 Ellsworth referred to a similar argument put forward by Vera Brittain in 1960, that the Victorian headmistresses were acting a part and projecting to others their own ideas of themselves as individuals and as a group.<sup>78</sup>

The performative characteristic of networking was even applied to the links between the historians and the past educationalists. The historiography was seen as a

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<sup>74</sup> Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 173; Goodman, ' "Their market values" ' 182

<sup>75</sup> For examples of Gurney's use of sponsored mobility and closure see chapter 4.4.v and 4.6, chapter 5.1.ii, chapter 6.2.ii, chapter 7.2.i

<sup>76</sup> Milsom, *Inter-war headmistresses*; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', 97, 114, footnote 6

<sup>77</sup> Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*, 12, 20

<sup>78</sup> Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 139, 310, footnote 44

network of strands that reached backwards, forwards, and sideways across the last 200 years. In this process the players' chosen professionalism demonstrated the commonality and dissonance that existed between them. Moreover, it was appreciated by the historians that women reformers of the past were determining their own history when they chose to be seen as part of a network. They had rejected the trope that success was achievable in heroic isolation from others. It was felt that historians should not distort this chosen identity by imposing on them the image of isolated women of worth.<sup>79</sup> The *DNB* in the early twentieth century did not avoid this distortion when it focussed on only a few of them.

Prompted by this idea that networks are spatial as well as relational constructs, the historians' networking lens began to encompass more than a local and national perspective. Past transnational networks were examined, particularly those that traversed British territories across the world. It was recognised that these networks involved a diaspora of middle-class female educators in a multi-directional flow, not just one from the centre to the periphery. It was also proposed that they may have increased the pace at which those reformers' authority developed.<sup>80</sup> The application of a transnational feature to the concept of spatial networking makes the power of Gurney's career and the strength of its legacies more visible in this thesis.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 3 - 11; Fitzgerald, 'Networks of influence', 35; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', 97 - 101, 115, footnote 8; Whitehead, 'Mary Gutteridge', Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 122; Raftery, D. 'Lives, networks and topographies of time and place: new turns in the history of women and education', Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 180

<sup>80</sup> Goodman ' "Their market values" '; Milsom, *Inter-war headmistresses* ; Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 2, 9; Fitzgerald, 'Networks of influence', 32 - 35; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', 103 - 109, 117, footnote 49; Whitehead, 'Mary Gutteridge', 122, 132, 145, footnote 7

<sup>81</sup> For Gurney's transnational perspective see chapter 5.2.v



In the 2000s feminist historians added another feature to their concept of a spatial network. They argued that it can also be seen as a dangerous borderland between women's private and men's public spheres, created by the edginess of its challenge to the notion of those separate spheres. This concept of a perilous, as opposed to a safe, spatial network was used by Goodman, Harrop, and Martin in 2000 and 2004. It was used by Fitzgerald, Raftery, and Smyth in 2014.<sup>82</sup> It was argued that Victorian and Edwardian female reformers learnt to take greater risks and experience failure within networked borderlands. For example, schools, colleges, and societies provided female educationalists with training grounds in public-speaking, charring meetings, financing projects, and running bureaucracies but they practised without a guarantee of support or success. Thus, the Froebelian network was seen by some of Gurney's contemporaries as a potentially endangering space within which to promote the female voice and Davies warned the reformers to be careful in public debate.<sup>83</sup>

To help prove their argument the historians identified past female reformers, such as headmistresses Buss, Beale, and Mary Porter, who deliberately turned their spatial networks into these challenging borderlands by blurring the boundaries between their private and public finances. My research, in support of the argument, found further examples of GST headmistresses who practised this blurring: Edith Hastings, Reta Oldham, and 'Miss Sheldon'. They all drew salaries as employees. Nevertheless, they donated much personal time and money to their professional enterprises, in addition to gifting and letting their private housing to them. These actions attempted to

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<sup>82</sup> Goodman, 'Women school board members', 66; Martin, 'Women not wanted', 79; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*, 23; Fitzgerald, 'Networks of influence', 24 - 25; Raftery, 'Lives, networks and topographies', 182 - 187, footnote 15

<sup>83</sup> Voice is taken to mean expression of opinions by a group as well as by a person. It can be delivered by representatives such as MPs, local politicians, or trade unionists. See Martin, *Women and the politics of schooling*, 50 - 70; Whitehead, 'Mary Gutteridge', 125; Read, 'Froebelian women', 18; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*, 81; Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 83 - 84

strengthen and consolidate the power they exercised but they also risked its growth, by edging themselves towards new and ever more challenging responsibilities as their enterprises expanded.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Gurney also blurred financial boundaries for the same career goals. More remarkably, she continued this risk-taking after her death. She bequeathed most of her wealth to Girton College, trusting that it would consolidate some of her work.<sup>85</sup>

As in the case of feminist theories, caution was recommended by feminist historians in the use of networking theories. The idea of networks bestowing on the reformers, in an orderly progression, an authority based on ageing was criticised. Instead they saw networking as beset by tensions and contradictions which made the reformers fallible and fragmented. Also, it was pointed out that while these networks allowed the alteration of gender identity, they did not encourage the alteration of class and racial identities.<sup>86</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter concentrates on the historical literature which forms the context of the thesis. It shows why and how Gurney's career was absent from writing on past female education despite the judgement of contemporaries that her career was important to that education. It also demonstrates how the concepts used in the thesis to enhance an

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<sup>84</sup> GDS6/4/2 (13<sup>th</sup> July 1904); GDS6/4/6 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1912); GDS6/3/1/5 (10<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1917 and 7<sup>th</sup> March 1917); Hunt, F. 'Social class and the grading of schools, realities in girls' secondary education 1880 - 1940', Purvis, *The education of girls and women*, 37; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming' 101

<sup>85</sup> GDS21/2/5 Papers relating to the Mary Gurney School Scholarships and exhibitions, 1918 - 1975; GDS21/2/11 Papers relating to the M. Gurney classics prizes, 1918 - 1981; GCGB2/1/18 (17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1906 and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1907) 138 and 232; GCGB2/1/19 (7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1909, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1910, and 20<sup>th</sup> June 1911) 147, 247, and 357; GC reports 4 (Nov. 1917, Nov. 1922, and Dec. 1923) 11, 27 and 12 respectively; GCAR/2/6/38; Probate Registry; for a fuller discussion of Gurney's financial gifts and legacies to GC and the GST see chapter 5.2.iii and chapter 7.1

<sup>86</sup> Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 2 - 3; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', 97, 105; Whitehead, 'Mary Gutteridge', 122

understanding of her work come from revisionist and post-revisionist historical writing, especially their feminist strand. The previous gap in educational historiography and the positioning of this historical study with the writings of post-classical feminist historians need highlighting if the thesis' originality and approach are to be fully understood. Both the neglect and the location are the historiographical context of the thesis. The next chapter moves into the history of Gurney's work and considers the wider background and the familial background to that work, in particular how and why she was offered entry into educational networks by her family. This framework was essential in determining the professional choices she made during her career.

## Chapter three: The background to Gurney's work

### Introduction

Gurney's career and its legacies can only be fully understood if the framework underpinning her work is analysed. It is important that the factors supporting and directing her work, outside of her capabilities and vision, are also appreciated. This background was partly created by her extended and immediate family members. Indeed, some of these men and women were of considerable importance to the formation of Gurney's aspirations and competences. However, in the case of the members who lived and died before Gurney was born, the arguments presented about their possible impact on her mind-set and work are not backed by extant evidence and remain only plausible deductions. Nevertheless, it can be shown more convincingly that some contemporary family members were influential in her career as exemplars and mentors. In addition, they provided her with professional and networking opportunities to enter and expand her presence within Victorian education.<sup>1</sup> To varying degrees the work of some of her relatives has already been acknowledged by historians. However, until now its support of her career has not been identified. Furthermore, Gurney chose her career-path because of the educational, political, and social needs of English middle-class females in the second half of the nineteenth century. These needs were the more general and less personal parts of the framework but they were of vital importance to the decisions made about the direction of her work. Their wide-ranging presence mixed with the influences of her family as well as

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<sup>1</sup> These contemporary family members are identified and their professional connections with Gurney, which facilitated some of her networking opportunities, are measured in table 4.1 at the end of chapter 4 as well as identified and analysed in the text of this chapter

with her own decision-making and abilities. Together they produced the professional choices she made from the 1860s to the 1910s.

## 1

### The wider factors

When Gurney began her work in the 1870s there was no mass provision of education for middle-class women and girls which was equivalent to that offered to middle-class men and boys. There was no identifiably national approach to academic secondary and tertiary education for middle-class females which equalled the system behind middle-class male education. Although the state was not yet involved in such education, middle-class men and boys had available to them the classical type provided by the endowed universities, public schools, and grammar schools.

There were exceptions to this lack of provision for middle-class females but those exceptions were not available to most among them and they could not be described as providing a uniform service across the country. From the 1850s the North London Collegiate School under Frances Buss attempted to provide an equivalent education, particularly after the 1865 opening of Cambridge University's local examinations to girls. From 1869 while still in Hitchin, Cambridge's Girton College had begun to train women to pass university examinations even if they could not graduate. In the 1850s and 1860s Queen's College and Bedford College in central London as well as Cheltenham Ladies' College, under Dorothea Beale, were also seeking to deliver equal provision.

After 1857 the reformers used the congresses of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science to debate the question of female education. For example,

in 1864 Joshua Fitch read a paper by Emily Davies on the issue.<sup>2</sup> The North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, established in 1867, also campaigned. The Schools Inquiry Commission of 1864 to 1868 produced the Taunton Report which highlighted the inadequacy of girls' secondary education. The ensuing 1869 Endowed Schools Act created the Endowed Schools Commission under George Lyttelton. Between 1869 and 1874 this commission sought to spread existing endowments in order to expand that education and to raise its standard. However, the process was slow and met with resistance.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, when Gurney began her work the education offered by the endowed institutions to middle-class males was also subject to criticism and was seen as in need of reform.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Matthew Arnold, as HMI, had advocated in his report to the SIC and in another publication that the state should become involved in the improvement of secondary and tertiary education. He also advocated that such improvement should maintain educational distinctions between the different classes of English society.<sup>5</sup> Arnold's vision of state intervention was not enacted until the twentieth century. Nevertheless, despite the inadequacies of male education Gurney focussed her energies on the campaign to provide middle-class women and girls with an equivalent education to that given to middle-class men and boys.

The absence of full suffrage rights for middle-class women was another reason behind Gurney's educational work. Early in her career she was named in the English

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<sup>2</sup> Davies, E. (1864) 'On secondary instruction, as relating to girls', Hamilton and Schroeder, *Nineteenth-century British*, 17 - 27

<sup>3</sup> Fletcher, *Feminists and bureaucrats*

<sup>4</sup> Bamford, T. (1967) *The rise of the public school*, London: Nelson; Simon, B. and Bradley, I. (eds.), (1975) *The Victorian public school*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

<sup>5</sup> Arnold, M. (1864) *A French Eton, or middle-class education and the state*, London: Macmillan; Collini, S. 'M. Arnold', *ODNB*; McCulloch, G. (2006) 'Education and the middle classes: the case of the English grammar schools, 1868 - 1944', *History of Education*, 35, 6, 689 - 690

press as a supporter of the suffragist campaign and this support lasted until her final years when she probably took part in the boycott of the 1911 UK Census. To Gurney the campaign for female education and the campaign for the female franchise were bound together in mutual assistance, hence her work for both those aspects of the Victorian women's 'many-sided' movement, as Millicent Fawcett described it.<sup>6</sup> More broadly, Gurney's work was also part of a response to the middle-class concern to maintain social status through education. This concern was highlighted by the Taunton Commission in the 1860s and it began to be applied to middle-class women during contemporary discussions of them. There was a fear of penury for those among them who remained unmarried and untrained, and a fear that middle-class culture would decline across the generations if mothers of that rank remained uneducated.<sup>7</sup>

However, alongside these less personal initiators and drivers of Gurney's work, the indirect lessons about reform and the direct educational connections which she received from some of her extended and immediate family members made those relatives into similarly powerful forces behind the professional choices of her career. They acted as her exemplars, mentors, and facilitators.

2

The extended family

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Norfolk bankers and social reform<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Times* (31<sup>st</sup> May 1875); UK Census 1841 - 1911, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/) and [www.ancestry.org.uk/](http://www.ancestry.org.uk/) (last accessed Nov. 2017); Fawcett, *What I remember*, 117 - 118

<sup>7</sup> Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 11, 27 - 33

<sup>8</sup> For a family tree of some of the Norfolk branch of the Gurney family see table 3.2 at the end of this chapter

A history of Gurney's family was originally written in the 1840s by her grandfather, William Brodie Gurney. In 1902 this book was revised by William Henry Gurney Salter, Gurney's cousin and son of her aunt Emma Gurney Salter. According to the revision Gurney was descended from a family living in London during the Tudor period and by the early seventeenth century a branch of this family was living in Norfolk. This connection between the two groups of Gurneys has been questioned by another descendant.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the 1902 book did not question it. Instead it was shown clearly in a family tree.

Also, however distant they were in relationship and geography, the two branches of the family were close in sentiment and provided Gurney with the same and similar models of belief and action. Both were non-conformist and economically enterprising with the ability to run professional businesses, both worked to preserve and further their middle-class status achieved by the eighteenth century, both believed in education and the need to address political and social injustices from positions of leadership, power, and relative wealth. Most importantly, as they pursued their interests both had wide philanthropic networks. For example, from the 1790s to the 1890s members of both branches worked for the BFSS and for the movement for the abolition of slavery. Moreover, some of the late nineteenth-century family living in Norfolk were involved with Gurney in her work to establish a GST high school in that county.<sup>10</sup>

By the eighteenth century the East Anglian branch had become Quakers. They had also established a business in the production and the sale of wool which led in the

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<sup>9</sup> Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars*; C. Salter, *Histories of the Gurney family*, [www.talltalesfromthetrees.blogspot.com/](http://www.talltalesfromthetrees.blogspot.com/) (last accessed Oct. 2017) with additional information supplied by email (May 2018)

<sup>10</sup> GDS3/3/2 (4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1875) 94, 100



1770s to the creation of the bank called Gurney and Company, also known as the Norwich Bank. Eventually in 1896 it merged with its rival: Barclay and Company of London. In addition, in 1807 Samuel Gurney of Norfolk became a partner in a bill-brokerage. Under the name of Overend Gurney it became by the 1820s of considerable importance to the financial activities of the City of London.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, this contemporary of Gurney's grandfather worked for the reform of the penal code, for the improvement of prisons, and between 1843 and 1856 for the BFSS as its treasurer.<sup>12</sup> By 1863 Gurney was also working for the BFSS.

Samuel's sister, Elizabeth Gurney Fry, provided another exemplar for Gurney to contemplate as she grew and considered her own future. At first Elizabeth established a Sunday school in Norfolk and then, while raising ten children, a girls' school in north-east London at East Ham. By 1811 she was a Quaker minister and by 1813 she was working to improve the living conditions of women in London's Newgate Prison, partly by establishing a school for their children. This work led in 1817 to her creation of a local Ladies' Association for the Reformation of Female Prisoners and to her national campaign across Britain and Ireland for reform at other prisons. After 1821 this campaign was supported by her further creation of the British Ladies' Society for Promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners. Finally, between 1838 and 1843 the Society took on a transnational character when Elizabeth extended her campaign to the European continent. At the same time she published pamphlets about her beliefs and began to consider how to improve the transportation of female convicts and the working conditions of nurses and servants. Although she died when Gurney was only

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<sup>11</sup> Sowerbutts, R., Schneebalg, M., and Hubert, F. (2016) 'The demise of Overend Gurney', *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*, 2, 94 - 106, [www.bankofengland.co.uk/](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/) (last accessed March 2018)

<sup>12</sup> Boase, G., revised by Kirby, M. 'S. Gurney', *ODNB*

nine she left behind for her younger relative a model of how a woman could work in a transnational public space for reform.<sup>13</sup>

Among that generation of relatives in East Anglia Gurney could also look for philanthropic modelling from two of Samuel's other siblings: Louisa Gurney Hoare and Joseph John Gurney. They too became campaigners for prison reform and the end of slavery but it was Louisa who left another and more pertinent legacy when she died the year Gurney was born. She wrote three books on the education of children which were published between 1819 and 1826. The first of them continued to be published until the end of the century, such was its popularity. She also founded in 1825 the transnational Ladies' Society for Promoting Education in the West Indies.<sup>14</sup>

Some of these siblings' enterprises clearly affected the work of Samuel's son who shared his father's name. Apart from a career in banking and in the House of Commons, in 1846 he joined the Anti-Slavery Society's governing body and eventually became for eighteen years the Society's president. This MP and contemporary of Gurney's father lived long enough to provide the adult Gurney with one more exemplar of philanthropic behaviour. However, his banking career was less successful. In 1866, as a partner in Overend Gurney he had to endure its collapse. The wealth of Samuel and other members of his Norfolk family, as well as that of the Norwich Bank, were protected to an extent through certain financial manoeuvres but

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<sup>13</sup> Gurney, J. (1819) *Notes on a visit made to some prisons*, London: [?]; Fry, K. and Cresswell, R. (1847) *Memoirs of the life of Elizabeth Fry*, London: [?]; Rose, J. (1980) *Elizabeth Fry, a biography*, London: Macmillan; Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, 87; de Haan, F. 'E. Fry', *ODNB*; Milligan, E. 'J. J. Gurney', *ODNB*

<sup>14</sup> Hoare, L. (1819) *Hints for the improvement of early education and nursery discipline*, London: J. Hatchard and son; Hoare, L. (1824) *Friendly advice to parents on the management and education of children*, London: J. Hatchard and son; Hoare, L. (1826) *Letters from a work-house boy*, London: [?]; Drain, S. 'L. G. Hoare', *ODNB*

the collapse is remembered as triggering one of the most serious banking crises of nineteenth-century England.<sup>15</sup>

ii

London publishers and campaigners<sup>16</sup>

Not unexpectedly, there was no mention of Gurney's career in the revised version of the family history. More unexpectedly, that revision concentrated on the business acumen of Gurney's male relatives in London, rather than on their support for reform campaigns. In 1902 some of the men closest to Gurney were identified as 'England's great stenographic dynasty'.<sup>17</sup> A century later the *ODNB* rectified this by also reviewing those men's philanthropic work. Nevertheless, this concentration on her family's wealth-making was to an extent helpful when considering how and why Gurney followed her career. On a simple level it can be argued that their wealth, some of which she seems to have inherited and controlled as an unmarried woman, played a crucial role in her work as it gave her the freedom to act as an unpaid reformer. On a more complex level it can be argued that the entrepreneurial drive and financial assurance which she demonstrated, especially in her work for the GST and GC, replicated that of family members. Economic confidence sat as their legacy alongside religious beliefs, class sensibility, public conscience, academic interests, feminist thinking, charitable motivations, and the cultivation of networks. She could choose to use any and all of these attributes as guides throughout her career.

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<sup>15</sup> Sowerbutts, Schneebalg, and Hubert, 'The demise of Overend Gurney'; Davenport Hines, R. 'S. Gurney' *ODNB*

<sup>16</sup> For a family tree of some of the London branch of the Gurney family see table 3.1 at the end of this chapter

<sup>17</sup> Life, P. 'T. Gurney and J. Gurney', *ODNB*

Gurney's great-great grandfather, Thomas Gurney, was born in 1705. By this time his family were Baptists and lived near Woburn in Bedfordshire. His father was a miller but Thomas became a school teacher in Luton and Newport Pagnell. In 1902 it was believed that he developed the skill of shorthand in order to take down sermons and that he used the system explained in a popular 1707 publication by William Mason. By the 1730s Thomas was married and working as a teacher, only of shorthand, in the area of London known as Blackfriars. In 1748 he became the official shorthand writer to the Old Bailey Criminal Court, having carried out this role unofficially since 1738. It was claimed in the revised history that this was the first known appointment of a shorthand writer to an English court of law. He also carried out stenographic work in other Westminster courts and for the House of Commons. Thousands of his court recordings were published in the *Old Bailey sessions papers* between 1749 and 1769, the year before he died in Southwark. Crucially, in 1750 Thomas Gurney published *Brachygraphy, or, short-writing* and until 1884 this manual went through eighteen editions. They ensured his system's fame which was a modified version of Mason's system. So much so, that a likeness of Thomas is held by the National Portrait Gallery.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it was from the lifetime of Gurney's great-great grandfather that her London family can clearly be classified as middle class and from his lifetime two important sources of their wealth, which lasted across the nineteenth century, can be identified as stenography and publishing.

Thomas Gurney's son, Joseph, was born in 1744. Gurney's great grandfather succeeded his father as the official stenographer at the Old Bailey from 1770 to 1782 as well as conducting a private practice as a shorthand writer. He also operated as a

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<sup>18</sup> Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars; Life, 'T. Gurney and J. Gurney'*

book-seller and as a publisher in partnership with his elder sister, Martha. This business was near where he lived with his wife, Rebecca Brodie Gurney, in Holborn. However, by 1777 they were living in Stamford Hill, Hackney and by 1787 in Walworth, Surrey. He died there in 1815. About 1783 he was appointed shorthand reporter to both Houses of Parliament and served as government reporter at state trials. Moreover, as a demonstration of his business acumen, he later gained exclusive right to publish the *Old Bailey sessions papers* and transcripts of his other work.<sup>19</sup> Along with their economic interests Joseph and Martha were members of the Maze Pond Baptist Chapel in Southwark. Also, in the 1790s he joined the Abolition of Slavery Society, while she with the dissenter, William Fox, published radical pamphlets about abolition. In addition, Joseph was involved in the very early work of the BFSS through its Council and Rebecca provided another model of educational work for Gurney by establishing a girls' charity school.<sup>20</sup>

Gurney's paternal grandfather, William Brodie Gurney, a younger son of Joseph, was born in 1777. He inherited from his father all his copyrights, copper plates, unsold copies of published works, and shorthand notes. He too worked as a stenographer and became the official reporter to the House of Lords and House of Commons in 1806. By then, that post carried the further responsibility of heading Parliament's office of shorthand writers. He also continued to publish his grandfather's *Brachygraphy*. William Brodie held that official appointment until 1849, by which time Charles Dickens was recounting through *David Copperfield* his own 1830s' experience of using the Gurney system of shorthand as a parliamentary journalist. Outside of his

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<sup>19</sup> Life, 'T. Gurney and J. Gurney'

<sup>20</sup> British and Foreign Schools Society archive catalogue, [www.bfss.org.uk/](http://www.bfss.org.uk/) (last accessed Oct. 2017); Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars*; Whelan, T. (2009) 'William Fox, Martha Gurney and radical discourse of the 1790s', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 42, 3, 397 - 411

paid employments, William continued his family's philanthropy. In 1795 he established a Sunday school in Walworth and in 1807 another at Maze Pond. In the early 1800s he founded the Sunday School Union, of which he was successively secretary, treasurer, and president, as well as running a magazine for young Christians from 1805 until the 1830s. Also, in 1807, just before Elizabeth Gurney Fry's work for female prisoners began, William became a founding member of the London Female Penitentiary Committee. Moreover, in 1812 he assisted in the creation of the British and Foreign Bible Society which sought to spread religious knowledge among the poor in Britain and abroad. He supported the BFSS's missionary work in India during the 1820s and in 1828 he became treasurer of the Stepney Baptist College. William's wife, Gurney's paternal grandmother, was Ann Benham Gurney. She died in 1827, aged about 47, having had eleven children between 1804 and 1823. One source recorded her philanthropic work as wide-ranging in that it covered the needs of female prisoners, older women, and female readers of the Bible.<sup>21</sup> Once again, Gurney had a model of a female relative who concentrated on the reform of women's and girls' lives, but in terms of leadership and the exercise of philanthropic power Gurney appears to have taken more from the example of her grandfather.

By 1811 William was living at 16 Essex Street, near the Strand. By 1824 he also lived at Highwood, near Barnet in Middlesex. Although his town address remained the same until the 1830s, his country address had changed by 1829 to Muswell Hill, Middlesex and by 1835 to Denmark Hill, Surrey. Finally, after 1838 his town address, which was also his professional address, was 26 Abingdon Street, opposite the Houses of Parliament. When William died in 1855 his office and homes were still in

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<sup>21</sup> BFSS archive catalogue; Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars*; Stephen and Lee, *DNB*, 812 - 813; Life, 'T. Gurney and J. Gurney'; Salter, *Histories of the Gurney family*

Westminster and Denmark Hill.<sup>22</sup> As Gurney was raised in Denmark Hill she would have had the chance to know her grandfather in his final country residence. An image of the rear of this house was included in the 1902 family history. It was shown as built in the classical style with three storeys, private grounds, and several outbuildings. This house would probably have required more than three servants to service it and historians have used that number as an indicator of the upper middle-class status of their employer.<sup>23</sup> William's Camberwell mansion demonstrated his social standing at the start of Victoria's reign.

William's inclusion in the contemporary London address directories definitely confirmed that status. The *Royal Blue Book* claimed only to list the town and country residences of the nobility and gentry and *Boyle's Court Guide* also claimed to limit its entries to ladies and gentlemen of fashion. In addition, the directories confirmed that Gurney's London family rose within the middle class across the time of William's life. There were no addresses under the name of Gurney listed in *Boyle's* of 1796 but those of William and of his brother, John, were included by 1811. Across a similar time frame the Norfolk branch of the family also rose in status within that class. By 1819 the London and Norwich houses of the elder Samuel's cousin were also listed. Moreover, the addresses of Gurney's family continued to be listed in the exclusive

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<sup>22</sup> *Boyle's Court Guide* (1811, 1819, 1824, 1829, 1835, 1838) London: E. Boyle and Son; *Post Office London Court Directory* (1855) London: F. Kelly; *Royal Blue Book* (1829, 1831, 1846, 1847) London: B. Gardiner and Son; Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars*

<sup>23</sup> Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars*; see the social typology used in Nenadic S. 'The Victorian middle classes' Hamish Fraser, W. and Maver, I (eds), (1996) *Glasgow, 2: 1830 - 1912*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 272; see Dyos, H. (1961) *Victorian suburb: a study of the growth of Camberwell*, Leicester: Leicester University Press for a history of the physical and social development of Denmark Hill

directories throughout the nineteenth century. They held onto their status, even in 1866. Indeed, her address was listed in the 1913 *Boyle's*.<sup>24</sup>

iii

### Education and the law

In contrast to her grandfather William, Gurney's paternal great-uncle John did not follow his father into their stenography business. Born in 1768, this eldest son received an education at St Paul's School in London before training to be a barrister. In 1793 he was called to the bar at the Inner Temple, in 1816 he became a KC, and in 1820 he raised his legal profile further by his involvement in the prosecution of Cato Street Conspirators who plotted the assassination of British government ministers. In 1832, near the end of his career, he was knighted. One of his homes, until his death in 1845, was in Lincoln's Inn Fields at the centre of the English legal system.<sup>25</sup>

Despite his dissenting background, John attended Church of England services as he grew older. This other move into the English establishment was echoed in Gurney's funeral service, which was held in an Anglican church in Chelsea, despite her Baptist upbringing.<sup>26</sup> John as an establishment figure was not the only model he offered. Gurney began her career when concern about the link between class and education was relatively high.<sup>27</sup> This concern may have encouraged her work but she also had, as more specific encouragement, the example of her great-uncle's use of professional education to raise his status further than any other member of her extended or immediate family. John was the first of them to move away from commercial business

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<sup>24</sup> *Boyle's* (1796, 1811, 1819, 1824, 1829, 1835, 1838, 1861, 1913); *Post Office Court* (1855, 1858, 1863, 1879); *Royal Blue* (1829, 1831, 1846, 1847, 1860, 1865, 1866, 1873, 1883)

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton, J., revised by Pease-Watkin, C. 'Sir J. Gurney', *ODNB*

<sup>26</sup> GDS3/8/36 Papers relating to Council member, M. Gurney

<sup>27</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 28 - 29, 41, 85; Dyhouse, *Girls growing up*, 57, 141- 143; Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 11, 27 - 33



and into one of the leading professions, gaining a title in the process.<sup>28</sup> This was notable in a family which already had wealth and position within the upper middle-class. Nevertheless, it was his wife, Maria Hawes Gurney, who offered Gurney the simpler but again more resonant example of how a woman could use education as a way to enter public life. Just after Louisa Gurney Hoare became a published author, so did Maria.<sup>29</sup>

### 3

#### The immediate family

##### i

#### Cousins and reform

Several of John's children also became known to the public as professional men. One was John Hampden Gurney and the other was Russell Gurney. It is worth noticing that both of them were able to provide the adult Gurney with more than just models of past work. As living cousins of her father they could mentor her and introduce her to their networks of reformers.

John Hampden, who was born in 1802, became a priest in the Church of England in 1829 after reading law at Trinity College in Cambridge. In 1847 he became vicar of the London church known as St Mary's, situated on Bryanston Square in Marylebone. This was a highly respected position within the Anglican Church and in that role he made a name for himself as a popular preacher. He wrote over twenty books of sermons and they were frequently republished. He was also known as a philanthropist who wrote pamphlets on social issues. By the time he died in 1862 he

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<sup>28</sup> See Reader, W. (1966) *Professional men: the rise of the professional classes in nineteenth-century England*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson for past social mobility

<sup>29</sup> Gurney, M. (1835) *Rhymes for my children by a mother*, London: [?]

and his family were living close to the church in Gloucester Place and a year later the Hampden Gurney School was established in the area to honour his memory.<sup>30</sup>

As a young adult in the late 1850s Gurney would have had the opportunity to hear John Hampden's sermons, to meet those with whom he exchanged ideas, and to become familiar with the streets of Marylebone. Indeed, Gurney became a resident of Marylebone in the early 1880s.<sup>31</sup> Once living there her morale may also have been bolstered by reminders of his work for social reform. Nevertheless, it was John Hampden's brother, Russell, and that brother's wife, Emelia, who offered Gurney a far greater framework of support and direction. They were feminist reformers working inside and outside of Parliament who, at the start of her career, provided Gurney with an entrance to a more useful educational network of relationships and spaces, one which provided the basis of her later network. Their influence on her did not simply possess the weight of tradition and expectation, it was practical.

Russell was born in 1804 and also read law at Trinity College, before following his father into a legal career. He was called to the bar in 1828 at the Inner Temple and by 1845 he was a QC. Throughout the 1830s he was known to live with his father in Lincoln's Inn Fields, although by 1847 he was living in Russell Square. However, after his marriage in 1852 to Emelia Batten he resided, until his death in 1878, in Kensington Palace Gardens. In addition, until 1873 he kept accommodation at the Temple, by which time he had also acquired a country house near Reading, outside of London.<sup>32</sup> Gurney's familiarity with this husband and wife may have been such, that when she finally left her father's home in Wimbledon in 1879 she chose to live close

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<sup>30</sup> *Royal Blue* (1846); Gurney, J. H. (1860) *Sermons preached in St. Mary's Church, Marylebone*, London: [?]; Colloms B. 'J. H. Gurney', *ODNB*

<sup>31</sup> UK Census

<sup>32</sup> Curthoys, 'R. Gurney'

to them in Chelsea. Furthermore, although she next moved to Marylebone, by 1891 she had resettled permanently in Kensington. Until 1896, the year of Emelia's death, the two women only had Kensington Gardens separating their respective homes.<sup>33</sup>

In 1856 Russell became the Recorder of London, which made him legal advisor to the Corporation of London and senior judge at the Old Bailey. Nevertheless, his legal career also involved him in social reform. Between 1862 and 1877 he served on royal commissions concerned for example with endowed schools, penal servitude, transportation, and labour legislation. While in 1865, the same year that he became a Conservative MP, he joined the British government's investigation into the suppression of insurrection in Jamaica. This work brought him into contact with Charles Roundell, the secretary of the investigating commission, who, as the chairman of the GSC's Council between 1872 and 1877, went on to work closely with Gurney. In addition, Russell was also sent to the USA in 1871 to negotiate merchant claims made as part of the Treaty of Washington. Emelia recorded details of their work, as members of diplomatic communities abroad, in letters sent back to England. When published by her niece, Ellen Mary Gurney, they demonstrated how their public service crossed political and social boundaries as well as national boundaries.<sup>34</sup>

Russell's election to the House of Commons gave him an even greater opportunity than his commissions could provide to demonstrate effective philanthropy. With the younger Samuel Gurney and John Henry Gurney from Norfolk, he was part of the first generation of the family to enter Parliament. These three political relatives gave Gurney the exemplar of how to bring about change in society without stepping outside of the law. In 1867 Russell sought the passing of a bill to improve the administration

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<sup>33</sup> *Post Office Court* (1879); UK Census

<sup>34</sup> Curthoys, 'R. Gurney'; Morse, 'E. R. Gurney'; Gurney E. M., *The letters of Emelia Russell Gurney*

of the criminal law and in 1868 he successfully supported the passing of another bill which protected trade union funding. Then in 1870 he steered into law the Married Women's Property Act, despite much opposition and consequent alteration. In the debate surrounding its passage he claimed a central role in the network campaigning to improve married women's legal status. He argued that he had 'reason to know that the women of this country feel deeply on this question'.<sup>35</sup> The need for a further act in 1882 to strengthen his legislation also provided Gurney with an example of how difficult and slow reform could be at times, however robust one's effort.

As a young adult in the 1850s and 1860s Gurney had the opportunity to know the other two MPs in her family, as John Henry had a town house in Kensington Palace Gardens near that of Russell and Emelia. She would also have had the chance to observe how these cousins from Norfolk dealt with the scrutiny of the press when John Henry had to deal with a much publicised personal scandal from 1861 to 1863 and Samuel had to deal with the 1866 banking scandal.<sup>36</sup> That observation would have been a useful lesson for her when she worked to protect the reputation of female educational establishments later in the century.

## ii

### An educational network

Of even greater significance for Gurney than Russell's reform of married women's rights, Russell and Emelia were involved in the campaign to open higher education to women. In 1869 they were members with Emily Davies of the General Committee and the Executive Committee which founded and ran Hitchin College for Women in

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<sup>35</sup> Hollis, P. (1979) *Women in public: the women's movement 1850 - 1900*, London: Allen and Unwin, 195

<sup>36</sup> *Boyle's* (1861); *Manchester Times* (26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1861); *Belfast News-letter* (24<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1861); *Birmingham Daily Post* (23<sup>rd</sup> Jan. 1861); *Daily News* (29<sup>th</sup> April 1863, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1863)

Hertfordshire. They were still on those committees in 1871 when the College prepared to move to Girton, just outside of Cambridge. Russell's work for the College ended with his death, although Emelia's connection with it lasted nearly twenty years longer until 1895. In 1879 his work was commemorated through the creation of a history scholarship in his name. When Gurney joined and remained on its governing body from 1894 until 1917, she extended her family's connections with the College.<sup>37</sup>

Not only did Gurney follow her father's cousins onto that body, she supported the 1895 campaign of the Association for the Education of Women for the award of degrees to women by Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Through this support she again built upon their work in Cambridge.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it is clear that Russell and Emelia represented for their younger relative a route to initial contact with Davies, Stanley, Shirreff, and probably Grey if she chose to take it. Some of the roots of Gurney's own network, a network which lasted until the 1920s, can be traced back to the 1860s and the work of these two family members.

With Emelia's support, Russell was also involved in the push to open medical qualifications and registration for medical practice to women. Other colleagues in this campaign of the 1860s and 1870s were Davies, Sophia Jex-Blake, and the sister of Garrett Fawcett who was known as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Elizabeth was an exact contemporary of Gurney: both were born in 1836 and died in 1917.<sup>39</sup> Once again Gurney had the example of her father's cousins attempting to end some of the limits placed on women's education and once again she had the opportunity to develop her own feminist network through their connections with three other leading reformers.

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<sup>37</sup> GC report, 1869; GCGB2/1/2 (Jan. and Feb. 1871) 1 - 3; GC reports, 1894 - 1896; Delamont, 'S. E. Davies'

<sup>38</sup> *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1895)

<sup>39</sup> Roberts, S. 'S. Jex-Blake', *ODNB*; Elston, 'Anderson'; Howarth, 'Fawcett'

Indeed, for the causes of female education and suffrage Gurney often shared platforms from the 1870s to the 1910s with the two Garrett sisters and with more members of the Davies and Jex-Blake families than just Emily and Sophia. The origins of this wider collaboration, which lasted more than forty years, can also be reasonably credited to the influence of these two older relatives.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, Gurney followed Russell's use of the NAPSS's platform when her 1871 paper on female education was read. He had used it in 1862 when he read a paper by Davies called *Medicine as a profession for women*. However, his greatest contribution to the cause of women in medicine came in the 1870s. Jex-Blake had an essay published in 1869 under her name but with the same title as Davies' paper, although again to no avail.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, in the early 1870s she underwent medical training in Edinburgh without being able to qualify and Garrett Anderson resorted to qualifying and registering for practice in Paris. Although the two women disagreed on how to proceed, in early 1874 Jex-Blake directly petitioned Russell to assist in the passing of a relevant act. She wrote to him and met him.<sup>42</sup> From that year he successfully steered through Parliament the passage of a bill enabling medical licensing bodies to open their examinations to women. In 1876 it became the Russell Gurney Enabling Act. Then in 1877 Jex-Blake became one of the first women to benefit from the new law when she qualified and registered as a medical doctor in Great Britain.<sup>43</sup>

In a minor way, Gurney continued to replicate Russell's and Emelia's support for female medical education later in her career. In 1890 she attended a meeting at the

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<sup>40</sup> For these shared platforms across more than forty years see chapter 5.2.i - iv

<sup>41</sup> Jex-Blake, S. 'Medicine as a profession for women', Butler, J. (ed.), (1869) *Woman's work and woman's culture*, London: Macmillan, 78 - 120

<sup>42</sup> Todd, M. (1918) *The life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, London: Macmillan, [www.archive.org/](http://www.archive.org/) (last accessed Oct. 2017) 404 - 406

<sup>43</sup> Curthoys, 'R. Gurney'

Royal Medical and Surgical Society in London. It concerned the creation of a medical sciences department at the University College of South Wales which, it was argued, would benefit female as well as male medical students.<sup>44</sup> A personal reward for this work by the three of them came when their younger relative Helen Mary Gurney qualified as a medical doctor and practised as such in the 1910s.<sup>45</sup>

Overall, given their familial relationship, their common ambition for female education, their geographical proximity, and the shared membership of their educational networks, it is hard to believe that these older relatives' careers and networking were not in part the precursors of Gurney's career and networking. Her father's cousins appear as key parts of the framework underpinning Gurney's work and Emelia was as important as Russell in this process.

iii

#### A particular model

Emelia Batten Gurney belonged more to Gurney's generation of feminists than her husband. Born in 1823 she was nearly twenty years younger than Russell when they married. However, her marriage and age were probably not the only factors behind any influence she had over Gurney's career. Her own family background was likely to have played a part. Indeed, Russell's reforming instincts, especially on the female condition, may have partly developed because of his marriage to her.

Emelia's maternal grandfather was John Venn, rector of Holy Trinity Church on Clapham Common which, from the 1790s to the 1830s, was at the centre of the work of William Wilberforce and the 'Clapham Sect' for the abolition of slavery and other social reforms.<sup>46</sup> Her upbringing in such an evangelical family helps explain why she

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<sup>44</sup> *Western Mail* (24<sup>th</sup> July 1890) Cardiff

<sup>45</sup> For details of the relationship between Gurney and her niece Helen Gurney see chapter 7.2.ii

<sup>46</sup> Cowie, L. 'J. Venn', *ODNB*; Wolffe, J. 'W. Wilberforce', *ODNB*

too worked for the emancipation of women. It was not only Russell who could claim to have reformers among his relatives. Her grandfather and his grandfather and great aunt were part of the anti-slavery movement in the same earlier period.

Thus, some of Emelia's work for the education and training of women pre-dated Russell's parliamentary work for that cause. In 1860 she chaired a committee formed by Elizabeth Blackwell to campaign for female medical education in Great Britain. In 1849 Blackwell had already obtained a medical degree in the USA.<sup>47</sup> Through this committee Emelia came to support Garrett Anderson's training as a medical doctor and eventually to support her London Hospital for Women in Marylebone Road. In addition, Emelia's continuing support of female medical practice was reflected in her 1875 creation of a convalescent home for women in Orme Square, near Kensington Palace Gardens. Moreover, apart from seeking to create a university college for women in Hitchin and then Girton, in 1864 Emelia signed the memorial addressed to Cambridge University requesting that the university's local examinations were open to girls. Among the signatures were those of J.S. Mill and J. Kay-Shuttleworth.<sup>48</sup> When Gurney and Kay-Shuttleworth came together as founding councillors of the GSC in 1872 his previous link with Emelia could have eased that working relationship.

Furthermore, from April 1865 Emelia was an early member of the Kensington Society. This feminist debating group met at the home of its president, Charlotte Solly Manning.<sup>49</sup> Although the Society disbanded after three years, seven of its members were called as witnesses before the Schools Inquiry Commission of 1865 to 1868. The Society provided Gurney with another example of how networking could promote

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<sup>47</sup> Elston, M. 'E. Blackwell', *ODNB*; Morse, 'E. R. Gurney'

<sup>48</sup> GCPP/Davies/12/1 Press cuttings, 1863 - 1891, 16

<sup>49</sup> Sutherland, G. 'E. A. Manning', *ODNB*



female education, as well as a comprehensive view of who comprised the network behind that promotion. The list of members compiled by Davies, as the secretary of the Society, identified Emelia as the 35<sup>th</sup> out of 64 members to join between March 1865 and March 1867.<sup>50</sup> Garrett Anderson and Sophia Jex-Blake were also among that group. So too were two women whose work and associations were later closely linked with those of Gurney. They were Mary Porter, who was the first headmistress of the GSC, and Emma Wilks Fitch, a member of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, a supporter of the London College for Working Women, and wife of one of Gurney's key colleagues from the 1870s.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, Gurney was not listed as a member during the Society's first two years of existence. Of course, Davies' record may not have been exhaustive or Gurney may have joined the Society after it was compiled. Nor was her name one of the nearly 1,500 names on the Society's 1866 petition to parliament about female suffrage.<sup>52</sup> In the 1860s Gurney did not publicise her views as she did later in the century. Nevertheless, from early in that decade Emelia was a channel, working independently from Russell as well as with him, through which their cousin's eldest daughter could come to know the English feminists and understand their work, even if she did not yet debate with them or sign petitions.

Lastly, Emelia's concern over time for female education was made plain when she wrote about her 1883 visit to CLC. She was 'greatly gratified and really uplifted' by seeing the work of the Lady Principal, Dorothea Beale, 'in the midst of her 900 pupils and teachers'.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Emelia was a close friend of Beale. In an 1896 letter Beale mourned the death of 'our beloved friend'. In an earlier one of 1893 Beale wrote that

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<sup>50</sup> GCPP/Davies/10/1 - 3 Papers on the Kensington Society, 1865 - 1867

<sup>51</sup> Hunt, F. 'M. Porter' *ODNB*; Robertson, 'Fitch'

<sup>52</sup> GCPP/Davies/10/1 - 3

<sup>53</sup> Gurney, E. M., *The letters of Emelia Russell Gurney*, 269

Emelia had spent six weeks with her, which had been ‘a great pleasure’.<sup>54</sup> Their relationship may have first developed in the 1860s, as Beale was also a member of the Kensington Society, and from 1875 the presence of Beale in Emelia’s network may again have eased one of Gurney’s new working relationships.

Overall, Russell made a distinctive contribution to the welfare of women from his position of power but Emelia also worked for that welfare. In the process she gave Gurney a less public model, though a more relevant one, of how she could use her talents from outside of the House of Commons. She was particularly useful as, for nearly twenty years longer than Russell, Emelia could act not just as a model but also as a mentor and an important networker for her younger relative.

4

The father

i

43 years

The example Gurney’s father set her over four decades had greater immediacy than that of his cousins, as she lived with him until she was 43. However, the example was not so directly concerned with feminism. Nevertheless, Joseph Gurney’s religious devotion, his entrepreneurial and professional skills, his wealth and philanthropy, his scholarship and connections with educationalists meant that he too had the power to be important to her career. Indeed, Joseph’s power to shape her work was arguably far stronger than any other relatives’ power because of the closeness of their relationship, especially as her mother died when Gurney was six and was therefore unable to raise her.

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<sup>54</sup> Raikes, E. (1908) *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham*, London: A. Constable, 197, 387

Moreover, Joseph had another daughter with his second wife who was a reformer of note and this strengthens the argument that he was capable of inspiring activism. Gurney's half-sister Catherine appears to have inherited his religious conscience, entrepreneurial inclinations, and sense of public service just as Gurney appears to have done. In the 1880s Catherine founded the International Christian Police Association to improve their welfare and in the 1890s she established several convalescent homes for the police as well as orphanages for their children. She also established auxiliary hospitals during the First World War and in 1919 she received an OBE for this work.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Catherine felt she could identify their father's influence on her step-sister. In response to a request from Edith Hastings, Catherine included a short family history in a letter to Hastings of October 1922. In it she asserted, possibly with a degree of envy, that 'Mary was wonderfully like our father in character and they always seemed to be very united in everything'.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, even after Gurney's 1871 entry into the public campaign for female education, which was based in central London, there seems to have been no serious disagreement over her new role, and certainly not one that led to her leaving her family home. This suggests there was at least some truth in Catherine's rather vague contention that Joseph and his eldest daughter were 'united', even if it was only over female education rather than 'everything'. Only in 1879, the year of Joseph's death, did Gurney with her younger sister, Amelia, move to Chelsea. In central London both of them remained unmarried and instead lived together for the rest of Gurney's life, supported by private incomes. These incomes had only one feasible origin: financial inheritance from their father who had maintained the businesses established and

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<sup>55</sup> [www.childrenshomes.org.uk/Catherine Gurney](http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/Catherine_Gurney) (last accessed Oct. 2017) and [www.iwm.org.uk/Catherine Gurney](http://www.iwm.org.uk/Catherine_Gurney) (last accessed Jan. 2019)

<sup>56</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922)

developed by previous generations of his family. This paternal gift of financial independence made it possible for Gurney to continue in her unpaid career after that move. She did not have to limit her philanthropy and find paid employment as a teacher. She remained free to direct her energies in a manner that would have the greatest impact on female education.

Gurney's private income was generated by the investment of her capital in shares issued by companies across the world.<sup>57</sup> Administered by London stockbrokers, they provided enough financial return for her to maintain her status as an upper middle-class woman. Gurney recorded in the 1881 UK Census that she lived off her 'own means' with resident servants. At first these servants were a groom and a cook who were married to each other, although in the 1891 UK Census she recorded that they were instead a cook and a housemaid. Nevertheless, in both Gurney's and Amelia's wills another male servant was provided with a financial legacy because of his 'faithful services', as was his son and his female relative who was Gurney's god-daughter. These servants can be regarded as part of the relational network which supported her work as an educator, although they were not influential in the ways of some of her family and colleagues.<sup>58</sup> The role of Amelia in Gurney's career needs recognition as well. It appears she held the same reformist views and provided her sister with administrative support as well as life-long companionship, even if she was not herself a model of professional work.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast to such sibling and posthumous paternal support, in 1880 Gurney's step-mother and her half-sister Catherine moved to Notting Hill Gate, from where

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<sup>57</sup> GCAR/2/6/38

<sup>58</sup> UK Census; Probate Registry

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of Amelia's support for Gurney's work and of the influence of Gurney on Amelia see chapter 7.2.ii

Catherine claimed later and ambiguously that they were ‘quite in touch’ with Gurney and Amelia. She also seemed to avoid explaining why Gurney left the family home in 1879 by further writing rather defensively in her 1922 history’s accompanying letter: ‘I do not quite understand your question about accounting for my sister’s leaving’.<sup>60</sup> Again it appears that it was not the bond between Gurney and her step-family that kept her living in her father’s houses until middle-age but the bond between Gurney and her father. Indeed, Gurney’s burial place in Putney Vale Cemetery also indicated that the paternal ties of her early years remained strong and positive, as did the single form of identity on her tombstone: ‘Mary, daughter of Joseph Gurney’.

## ii

### An upper middle-class setting

Joseph Gurney, son of William Brodie and Ann, was born in 1804, the same year as his cousin Russell was born. He followed his father into the family business of shorthand writing, as did his younger brother Thomas. In contrast, Joseph Gurney’s elder brother, another William, became a solicitor. It seems that across the family, the business of stenography was reserved for younger sons and the business of the law, either branch, for elder sons. Indeed, Gurney’s elder brother, unsurprisingly called William, became a solicitor too. Joseph also followed his father into the Baptist Church. Catherine revealed that ‘he had not much teaching at school’. This stood in contrast to his two cousins’ education at Trinity College and may help to explain his later academic endeavours. He began his work as a recorder in the House of Commons in 1822. In 1849 he succeeded his father as the official reporter to the Houses of Parliament and head of their department of shorthand writers. He kept that post until 1872. Given that the younger Samuel from Norfolk was MP for Penryn and Falmouth

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<sup>60</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922)

from 1857 to 1865 and Russell was MP for Southampton from 1865 until at least 1876, Joseph could have easily met these relatives on a daily basis for over twenty years. This would have enhanced Gurney's opportunity to closely follow Samuel's and Russell's reforming endeavours. In this case Joseph would have been another conduit in his daughter's embryonic network. By the time of his retirement four generations of the Gurney family had been officially responsible for the recording of Parliamentary proceedings. There was to be only one more generation involved in this work. Joseph's nephews both held the post: William Henry Gurney Salter from 1872 to 1912 and William Gurney Angus from 1912 to 1914. Alongside the survival of the family business of stenography, profit-seeking editions of Thomas Gurney's 1750 *Brachygraphy* continued to appear during Joseph's lifetime.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1830s and 1840s Joseph and Thomas shared with their father his central London house in Abingdon Street, which was also used as the office of W. B. Gurney and Sons, shorthand writers. After William Brodie died, they remained professional and private residents of Abingdon Street but by then they had also acquired their own country houses in the rural parts of south London. In 1922 Catherine recalled details of the four Joseph lived in during his two marriages and where his children were raised.<sup>62</sup> The first was near his father's country house in Denmark Hill. Between 1834 and 1841 Gurney and her two siblings were born there to his first wife, Emma Rawlings Gurney. In the 1841 UK Census Joseph recorded three female servants also living in his household, a sign that he retained his father's upper middle-class status. After the death of Emma in 1842 Joseph married Harriet Tritton and by 1844 he had moved his family to a house in Battersea's Lavender Hill. Catherine wrote of it as a

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<sup>61</sup> Gurney and Salter, *Some particulars*; Davis, C. (1900) *History of the British school, Wandsworth, 1821 - 1895*, Wandsworth: [BFSS?] 15 - 31

<sup>62</sup> For the sites in Victorian north-east Surrey where Gurney's grandfather and father positioned their country houses see map 3.1 at the end of this chapter

‘good sized, old fashioned house with a large garden...but the railway encroached on it and we were obliged to move. A theatre and small houses are now built over the site’. Her words captured a sense of the changing landscape of Gurney’s childhood, youth, and early adulthood, nevertheless this space was still more rural than suburban. It was also filled with a larger family.<sup>63</sup>

Between 1845 and 1850 the last four of Joseph’s seven children were born. Gurney’s half siblings were Harriet, Joseph John, Catherine and Edward Tritton. Joseph John shared the unusual combination of Christian names with Joseph John of the Norfolk branch of the family who died about the same time as he was born. In the 1851 UK Census Joseph recorded that the family were still living in Lavender Hill and that they had by then a governess as well as five servants. The servants were identified as a nurse, a cook, two housemaids and a footman. This record makes it clear that two of them had been in service with the family in Denmark Hill ten years before. One was the nurse known as Ann Felsted and the other was the housemaid known as Jane Smith.

Then at some point between 1861 and 1866, when Gurney was aged between 25 and 30, Joseph moved his family further out of London, although Thomas, his brother, stayed living in the increasingly suburban Brixton Hill. According to Catherine, this third country house was built for the family on the Kingston Road at West Hill near Putney Heath and was known as Birdhurst. In the 1871 UK Census Joseph recorded that they had four servants. Again one of them was Ann, now classified not as a nurse but as a ‘needlewoman’ and who at the age of 63 remained unmarried. In that year she

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<sup>63</sup> *Royal Blue* (1831, 1846); *Boyle’s* (1838, 1861); *Post Office London Directory* (1836) London: B. Critchett; *Post Office London Commercial Directory* (1879) London: Kelly’s Directories; Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); UK Census

had been in Joseph's service for at least 30 years, possibly all of Gurney's 35 years of life. This longevity of service indicated the stability of the home he provided for his daughter, despite the death of her mother when she was a young child. Also the size of the staff once again indicated that in his final years Joseph retained his upper middle-class status. Indeed, the house was large enough for Joseph John, who had become a mechanical engineer, to live there with his wife.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, from 1872 or 1873 Joseph's last house in the country was next to Wimbledon Common. By that time Gurney was beginning her career for the GSC. In the 1840s much of the area in which the house eventually stood had been sold by the aristocratic Spencer family to a property speculator who divided up the land for building work. Despite this, in the 1880s the area was still described as a deserted place full of woods and meadows. Gurney was known as a skilled and enthusiastic horse-rider and carriage driver and she may have used this natural landscape to enjoy and hone those skills. That reputation was reflected in the words of her colleague Henrietta Stanley. In an 1883 letter Stanley encouraged Gurney to bring her 'habit' so she could ride while staying at Naworth Castle in Cumberland. Also, in 1890 Stanley wrote that she was 'so glad to hear of you riding again...enjoying your favourite exercise'. In addition, the headmistresses of the GST also referred to this skill and enthusiasm in their 1918 subscription appeal for the establishment of a Mary Gurney Memorial Scholarship. They wrote: 'till nine years ago...[she rode] on horseback and quite recently...[drove] her dogcart, [which] made her realise the value of...physical exercise for girls'. The veracity of their words was indicated by one of Gurney's 1917 bequests to Amelia, consisting of 'my...horses carriages harness (sic)'. If the

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<sup>64</sup> *Post Office Court* (1863, 1879); *Royal Blue* (1860, 1865, 1866, 1873, 1883); Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); UK Census



headmistresses' record was as accurate as it seems Gurney was into her seventies when she was still riding horses and into her eighties when she was still driving her carriage. The rural setting of Gurney's youth and young adulthood as well as her upper middle-class upbringing, both provided by her father, gave her the chance to first develop these physical accomplishments. More importantly, they may have had a role in the development of her career as they meant she could travel independently of others across Victorian England.<sup>65</sup>

iii

#### Standards of behaviour

However, along with a seemingly stable and comfortable upbringing Joseph provided Gurney with an exacting model of financial confidence, academic achievement, and Christian engagement with the educational needs of others. Even the name of his Wimbledon house, Tyndale Lodge, reflected his respect for religious scholarship and because he did not need to accommodate her natural mother's influence Joseph could mould his eldest daughter's skills and ambitions far more than any other relative.

Apart from his professional career, for more than fifty years he was a member of the Committee of the Religious Tract Society, eventually becoming its treasurer. Following his father's example, he was also treasurer of the Stepney Baptist College when it was located in London's Regent's Park. The principal of the College at the time, Joseph Angus, was the husband of Joseph's sister, Amelia. These financial responsibilities were replicated by Gurney in her constant concern for the financial stability of the GST. Moreover, between 1850 and 1860, the Society published, in

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<sup>65</sup> CH/J23/8 Letters 1876 - 1896 (23<sup>rd</sup> March 1883 and 31<sup>st</sup> Dec.1890) Castle Howard archive; Probate Registry; GDS6/3/1/6 (10<sup>th</sup> April 1918) 79; Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 2; Barrett, J. (2013) *Wimbledon, the official history*, London: Vision Sports Publishing, 112

eight volumes, Joseph's *Annotated Paragraph Bible*. It contained his explanatory notes and the notes of other men who worked under his supervision, alongside the authorised version of the Old and New Testaments. This publication became a popular commentary on the Bible. In 1877 his *Revised English Bible* was also published, closely resembling the official version. The profits of these works were given to the Society.<sup>66</sup>

Catherine judged in 1922 that, although Joseph was not a Hebrew scholar, he was a Greek one and that to his religious endeavours 'he gave all his spare time and for which (however late he might have been in his parliamentary work) he never failed to get two hours before breakfast for study and prayer'. She also believed that he taught himself to read German as a young man. Even if the admiring tone of one of his younger daughters is ignored, it is reasonable to see Joseph with his habits, language skills, and publications as an exemplar of a scholar as well as a potential mentor to his eldest daughter. Therefore, it is not surprising that Catherine's history also included this description of Gurney. She 'taught herself Latin and Greek (for the Testament) and Italian and some Spanish long after she left school and constantly translated articles from the German'. Gurney's preference for classical studies when creating scholarships and prizes for students during her career further echoed her father's attachment to Greek.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, Gurney worked with her father for the BFSS. Apart from supporting its missionary work in Africa in the 1870s, from 1861 he was a governor of the BFSS's elementary school in Wandsworth, near to his south London houses. In 1863 she joined him in this work as another governor, with responsibility for the girls'

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<sup>66</sup> Davis, *History*, 15 - 31

<sup>67</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922)

department in the school.<sup>68</sup> Joseph had the influence and experience needed to provide Gurney with this first apprenticeship in educational administration and to mentor her during her exercise of it. In the process he could also introduce her to members of his own educational network. Indeed, this mentoring began earlier with his choice of school for her. He sent her to a private school for girls near Sheffield known as Wincobank Hall School.

Sometime between 1837 and 1846 it was opened by Mary and Emily Read in their late father's early Georgian country house. The family business was silver and gold refining. Previously in 1825 the Read sisters with their mother, Elizabeth, were founder members of the Sheffield Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society and the Hall became a northern centre of the anti-slavery campaign. Mary Read spearheaded a local boycott of goods produced by slaves and William Wilberforce, the leading abolitionist, was a guest of the family before he died in 1833. They were also keen to support the spread of religious education among the working class. In 1817 they opened a chapel with a Sunday school in the Hall's coach house and laundry buildings. In the early 1840s Mary Read with her mother went on to build a day-school for local children in its grounds as well as run the private school. The sisters were in age only a few years apart from Joseph and were members of his non-conformist and educational network. Mary Read was born in 1801 and when she died in 1887 she was buried in the Zion Chapel in Attercliffe, Sheffield.<sup>69</sup> On a more pertinent note, the Reads were able to give Gurney a continuation of the evangelical education she received at home. They also provided her with further examples of philanthropy and radicalism which connected with the work for the BFSS of Joseph and the anti-slavery work of the

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<sup>68</sup> BFSS archive catalogue; Davis, *History*, 15 - 31

<sup>69</sup> *Sheffield Telegraph* (23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 2017), [www.sheffieldtelegraph.co.uk/](http://www.sheffieldtelegraph.co.uk/) (last accessed Nov. 2018); Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 13; Wolfe, J. 'W. Wilberforce', *ODNB*

younger Samuel, another contemporary of the sisters. It is understandable why Gurney was sent to this school. For however long she was there and whatever the academic standard she reached, the Read family would have reinforced the religious and reforming ethos of her immediate and extended family and contributed to the likelihood that Gurney would become an activist working for a social need.

Joseph also sent Amelia away to school in Brighton. He recorded her presence there in the 1851 UK Census when she was ten years old. Interestingly, Gurney, who was by then aged fifteen, was not recorded as in Sheffield. Instead she was described as a ‘scholar at home’ and so were her younger half-siblings: Harriet and Joseph John. In contrast, Gurney’s eldest brother William, who was nineteen in that year, was described as a ‘scholar’.<sup>70</sup> Unlike Gurney’s advanced education, William’s probably took place away from home in a public or grammar school and then a university or a place of work. Joseph and his eldest daughter may have felt frustration over her lack of external academic opportunities. Nevertheless, if Catherine’s family history is believed, their father gave Gurney opportunities within their home to develop similar knowledge and abilities to those he possessed.

Another member of Joseph’s non-conformist and educational network was Joseph Payne, an experienced and innovative educationalist who was born in 1808 four years after Gurney’s father. From the 1830s to the 1860s Payne established and ran two successful grammar schools, one in Denmark Hill in London and the other in Leatherhead in Surrey. In 1846 he was also a founder of the College of Preceptors in London, which in the 1850s opened its examinations to women and girls. He wrote school text-books, but his scholarship was more connected to philology and to the

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<sup>70</sup> UK Census

principles behind teaching and learning. In 1865 he was invited to give evidence to the SIC and at NAPSS meetings in 1872 he voiced criticisms of the Education Department's 1862 Revised Code with its emphasis on rote learning. In the same year he was made the first English Professor of the Science and Art of Education. In that post he delivered several series of lectures designed to form part of teachers' training and he toured German educational establishments with a view to use them as exemplars. Some of his lectures were attended in particular by women.<sup>71</sup>

In the 1830s and 1840s the two Josephs and their young families lived near to each other in Denmark Hill and Camberwell Grove in south London. This connection originally developed through the Baptist Church minister John Dyer, father to Payne's wife Eliza Dyer Payne and also involved Gurney's grandfather, William, and Russell's mother, Maria. As she grew into adulthood Gurney was probably incorporated into her father's relationship with Payne. If so, this introduction may have assisted her work with him in the 1870s for the WEU, the GSC, and the Froebel Society. Once again it is possible to see how Gurney's father was able to support the development of her career. The introduction may also explain why after Payne's death in 1876 she edited for posthumous publication one of his books. Furthermore, their professional connection was valuable not only to Gurney's work, Payne's work benefitted from it too. Apart from editing his book, she oversaw the attendance of mistresses from the GSC's schools at his lectures on pedagogy.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Aldrich, *School and society in Victorian Britain*; Aldrich, 'Payne'

<sup>72</sup> Payne, J. (1876) *A visit to German schools: notes on a professional tour*, London: Henry King; Aldrich, *School and society*; Aldrich, 'Payne'

## Conclusion

An understanding of more than the influence of Gurney's immediate and extended family is needed to fully explain the background to her educational work. Her own initiative and innate talents produced her work. It was also the product of her society's lack of education and lack of suffrage rights for middle-class females as well as the consequence of her class's general fears over their status. Nevertheless, both women and men in Gurney's family provided her with a powerful inheritance which she could use to motivate and develop her choice of professional occupations. They provided her with models of religious devotion, of scholarly application, business acumen, class concern, feminist thinking, and of public service. Some of those living at the same time as her were also able to provide advice as she came to understand these legacies of behaviour. Moreover, some of them were able to give Gurney another vital tool for the pursuit of her work. Their relational and spatial networks made it possible for her to enter the educational arena of Victorian England with a degree of familiarity, confidence, and contact with like-minded people. Throughout her career she used a network to facilitate her endeavours which she developed herself. Nevertheless, she appears to have begun her work with inherited educational relationships and inherited educational spaces which formed the basis of her later extended network.

Of course, it is more difficult to prove that Gurney was swayed by the actions of family members and that she took up the opportunities they offered her than to recognise those actions and opportunities. The relevant extant evidence on her family's influence is limited. Nevertheless, the same passion for scholarship, philanthropy, and enterprise, together with the similarities in their choices of work and the shared membership of their networks, strongly suggest that Gurney's career was considerably affected by some family members.

Interestingly, these legacies meant that Gurney was challenged as well as privileged. The pressure on her to develop intellectually and to bring about reform, as some of her family had managed to do, was considerable and it was not guaranteed that she would emulate their philanthropic behaviour, benefit from their networking, or achieve a comparable level of social and educational change. This was particularly the case as she did not have the same access to power as that enjoyed by the male MPs in her family. In addition, along with success those men experienced opposition, delay, unfulfilled ambition, and public scandal. These negative experiences may also have acted as warnings to Gurney and further increased the pressure on her. Overall, it can be argued that the background to Gurney's career, with its wider societal features and its familial circumstances, meant her work was risky and demanding as well as relatively advantaged. The next three chapters show how she responded to the influences of that overarching framework.

Table 3.1: *Family tree of the Gurney family in London*

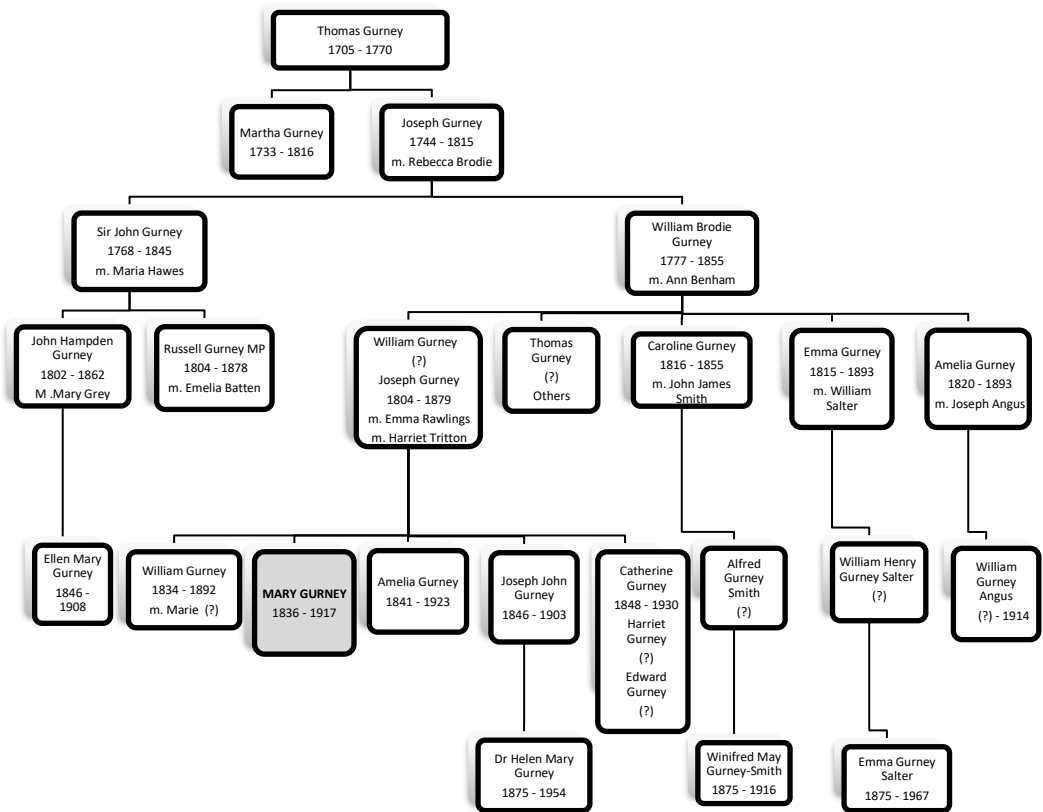
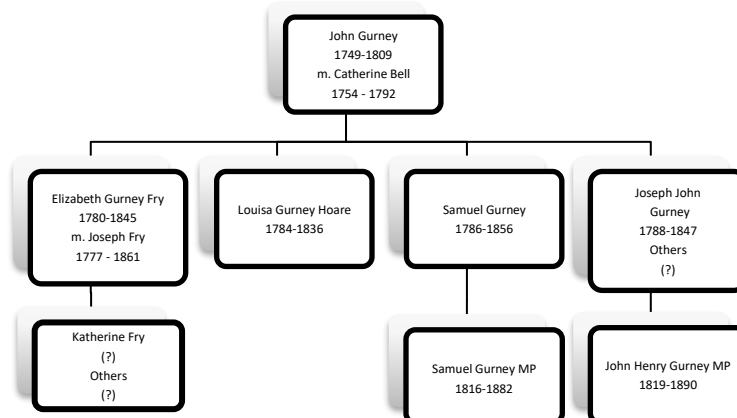
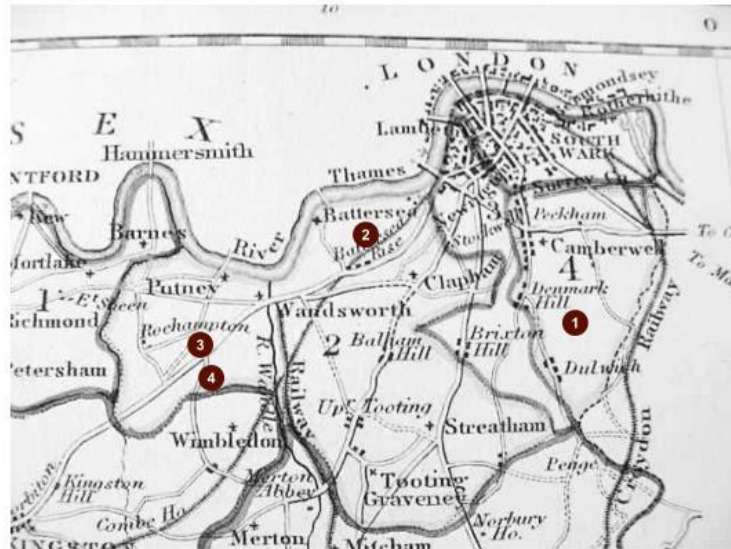


Table 3.2: *Family tree of the Gurney family in Norfolk*





Map 3.1: Sites in Victorian north-east Surrey where Gurney's grandfather and father positioned their country houses



Original map (without numbers) from Lewis, S. (ed.) (1848) *Lewis' topographical dictionary of England*, London: S. Lewis

*Key to map 3.1:*

1. Denmark Hill (William Brodie G. from the 1830s to the 1850s and Joseph G. from the 1830s to the 1840s)
2. Lavender Hill (Joseph G. from the 1840s to the 1860s)
3. West Hill (Joseph G. from the 1860s to 1872/3)
4. Wimbledon Parkside (Joseph G. from 1872/3 to 1879)

## Chapter four: A mid-Victorian apprenticeship

### Introduction

Between the 1860s and the 1890s Gurney began to develop her administrative, policy-making, and leadership skills in educational governance through her work for the BFSS, the WEU, and the GPDSC. This chapter analyses only those aspects of her apprenticeship, although she began work for other female education bodies in the same decades. That work is dealt with in chapter five. Despite the economic and social advantages she received from family members, Gurney's period of informal but public training was challenging. It was also necessary, as she intended to sustain as well as initiate female education. Therefore, this chapter and the next are important to a fuller understanding of Gurney's whole career.

In particular, the challenging nature of her early career was shaped by the failure of the ESC to rapidly establish a national system of female secondary education equivalent to that provided for boys, despite the encouragement of the 1868 Taunton Report and the 1869 Endowed Schools Act to begin such a project. Gurney made clear in her published writings of 1871 to 1875 that she had lost faith in the potential of the ESC to adequately supply endowments for female education at the pace she viewed as necessary. In addition, she made it clear that she no longer believed her cause would be assisted by any immediate and innovative state provision of secondary education, as envisioned by Matthew Arnold and recommended by Taunton.<sup>1</sup> Instead, in order to develop female education, Gurney's response to this delay and disappointment was to join with others in the use of finance mainly raised through fees, subscriptions, and the sale of share-holdings. It was also to join with others in the use of *laissez-faire*

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.2 of this chapter

policy-making and administrative methods. Hence, by the 1870s and 1880s she was able to seek and receive through her work a comprehensive training in educational governance across different types of educational provision, despite the lack of state intervention.

Moreover, her early career fits the categorisation established by Hunt, and used by Goodman and Harrop, when considering nineteenth-century female educational governance: that of organisational policy-making and administration within middle-level leadership.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Gurney's early work can be seen as paving some of the way for the growth of state intervention in twentieth-century England. From the 1870s to the 1890s she and her GSC colleagues undertook responsibility for the development of secondary education, a responsibility the English government did not adopt until 1902. By then the GSC could provide the new Board of Education with a prototype of how to run a national scheme of secondary schools, while Gurney and her colleagues in the Company had in many ways foreshadowed the Board's civil servants who worked on the state's new provision of secondary education.

## 1

### From the schoolroom to the BFSS

#### i

#### Teaching

There is some evidence that in the 1850s when Gurney lived in Lavender Hill she worked as a Sunday-school teacher and as a tutor to at least one of her younger half-sisters. Catherine recollected in 1922 that from 1852 to about 1857 her eldest half-sister taught her. This was possible because in the 1851 census Gurney was described

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<sup>2</sup> Goodman and Harrop, ' "Within marked boundaries" ', 2 - 3; for a discussion of this feminist perspective on leadership see chapter 2.2.ii

as a 'scholar at home', not a scholar in Yorkshire. According to the same account a governess replaced Gurney after those years, except in the teaching of music and German. Catherine claimed they constantly spoke in German to each other and that Gurney was 'a born teacher. No one could help loving to learn when she taught them'. While such an opinion on Gurney's teaching ability carries little weight without supporting evidence, the length of time over which the tuition took place does indicate commitment on her part to an educational responsibility beyond her own learning. Moreover, the unnecessary nature of the tuition, given that the household could afford a governess, reinforces the idea that Gurney had an interest in education as a form of work, not just as a form of self-improvement. In addition, Catherine remembered that in the same decade Gurney voluntarily ran the girls' department of the Sunday school near their home, while her eldest brother ran the boys' department. This was probably Gurney's first public demonstration of her desire to see females educated, although the act was typical of women of her class and religion and it lacked the reforming nature she was to develop in her work after the 1860s.<sup>3</sup>

## ii

### Governing

Nevertheless, in contrast and as part of her evolution into a feminist leader, in 1863 Gurney followed her father into more challenging work for a BFSS school in Wandsworth. She became honorary secretary of the governing committee of the girls' department. Her sister Amelia, as well as 'E. Rawlings' and 'Mrs Rawlings' who were probably her mother's nephew and his wife, were also simultaneous members of that governing committee. There is little extant evidence about Gurney's work for this

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<sup>3</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); UK Census

school, although Catherine described it as the management of correspondence and the making of constant visits to hear lessons. This half-sister distinctly recalled the ‘excitement of the inspection days’. It appears Gurney welcomed the challenge of inspecting others’ lessons. This BFSS appointment, which came as a result of networking and class privilege, directed her away from teaching and into educational bureaucracy. In that sense it was an important turning point in her career. Furthermore, the school developed during Gurney’s seventeen years as secretary. By 1867 there were 128 girls on its register and she oversaw with others the school’s transfer to new premises nearby. Also, in the 1870s the newly formed London School Board began to require what were described as lengthy returns from the governors. Gurney’s bureaucratic skills had the opportunity to expand. However, by 1880 she was no longer living in Wimbledon and this may explain why she relinquished the specific post of secretary in that year, although with Amelia she maintained her general place on the governing committee until 1895. Gurney’s 32 years of governance over the institution which introduced her to the formal procedures of working-class female education ended when the BFSS transferred the school to the LSB.<sup>4</sup>

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## Publication

i

### The NAPSS, EWR, and WEU

By the middle of 1871, after nearly a decade of work for the BFSS and with further time exposed to the reforming activities and networks of her relatives, Gurney began to write a paper about the need for female secondary education. She would have been

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<sup>4</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); Davis, *History*, 15 - 31

able to follow the debates within the NAPSS on that question during the 1860s, particularly the debate led by Russell Gurney in 1862. By early 1871 criticism of the slow pace of change had reached a new height. At a Society of Arts meeting Grey, Shirreff, and Lyttelton proposed that because the ESC's redistribution of endowments to aid the expansion of girls' secondary education was encountering strong opposition a systematic plan for that education should be put into practice by another body.

Gurney met Buss, the founder and first headmistress of the NLCS, in July 1871. Buss stated in a letter to the reformer, Ridley, that Gurney 'had been here today' and that her visitor was prompted to make their acquaintance from reading a public appeal in the press for funds to expand the provision of girls' secondary education in the London suburbs, including that provided by the NLCS. Buss also wrote that Gurney had talked of writing a paper for the October meeting of the NAPSS in Leeds. Buss explained that in response she had recommended to her visitor that an account of the NLCS, as well as of her other Camden school, be included as an example of what could be done at the secondary level for girls. Buss added that Gurney was deeply interested in all educational questions.<sup>5</sup> The impression made on the established reformer is worth noting: Gurney was not judged as an *ingénue* when it came to caring for female education. Indeed, this July 1871 meeting began 23 years of collaboration between the two women across many different enterprises in support of that cause. Buss became one of the most important members of Gurney's network of connections until the former's death in 1894 and that collaboration meant Gurney was able to assist Ridley in the production of the first biography of Buss.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from F. Buss to A. Ridley (July 6<sup>th</sup> 1871), Ridley, *Buss*, 119

<sup>6</sup> Ridley, *Buss*, preface

As planned, Gurney's paper was read in Leeds under the title, *What are the special requirements for the improvement of the education of girls?* It was read at the same session and under the same title as another paper written and delivered by Grey. Both appeared in the NAPSS's *Transactions*.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear if Gurney delivered her own paper. In 1922 Catherine claimed that her half-sister had hoped to do so but that she was detained abroad because their father had become ill during their travels in Switzerland.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, by the autumn of 1871 Gurney had placed herself at the centre of the initial campaign for female secondary education. She no longer needed to experience it through her relatives' networking. She was there through her own engagement with the public. In November the paper was also published as an article in the *Englishwoman's Review* under a different heading. It was called 'The establishment of girls' public middle class [sic] schools', by which Gurney meant the establishment of secondary education for girls.<sup>9</sup> In March 1872, after some alterations by her, it was further published as the second of a series of three pamphlets. This time it was entitled *Are we to have education for our middle-class girls? Or, the history of the Camden Collegiate Schools*. The other pamphlets were by Grey and Shirreff and that positioning was another indication of her growing importance to the initial campaign.<sup>10</sup>

Gurney demonstrated her frustration with the pace of change by asking in the October paper: 'Failing any State action, and whilst waiting for the development of

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<sup>7</sup> Gurney, M. (1871) 'What are the special requirements for the improvement of the education of girls?', Pears, E. (ed.), (1872) *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, 1871, London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, [www.catalog.hathitrust.org/](http://www.catalog.hathitrust.org/) (last accessed March 2019), 367 - 368

<sup>8</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922)

<sup>9</sup> Gurney, M. (1871) 'The establishment of girls' public middle class [sic] schools', *Englishwoman's Review*, 5, 5 - 17, Hamilton and Schroeder, *Nineteenth-century British women's education*, 245 - 257

<sup>10</sup> Gurney, M. (1872) *Are we to have education for our middle-class girls? Or, the history of the Camden collegiate schools*, London: Ridgway

the Endowed Schools Act to meet the case of girls...What could be done...by voluntary effort'?<sup>11</sup> The November article replicated the paper's tone of urgency. Gurney began by arguing that the education of English girls from professional and trading families was inadequate but that so too was the education which was supplied to 'girls of marked ability amongst the lower classes'. The addition of this third group to those needing secondary education indicated that Gurney's awareness of class divisions was strong but was not completely rigid. Her work in an elementary school may have developed this wider point of view. Gurney was indignant as to 'our loss as a nation in this waste of intelligence'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, her priority was made clear by the title of her 1872 pamphlet. She was motivated by feminism but class concerns encompassed and moulded that feminism, ultimately dominating it. Hence she chose to net/work for reform with middle and upper-class men rather than with working-class women. She concentrated on the provision of secondary and higher education for women and girls in an age when that provision was not seen as a working-class need.

The first part of the article also demonstrated that by 1871 her transnational perspective on female education was already in place. With a command of financial and curricular details, she compared unfavourably the education of girls in England with that provided in the USA, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and Norway. Gurney then again complained that the Taunton Report's remedy of three grades of secondary schools for girls, using existing endowments, must be considered 'abandoned for the present'. Moreover, she was not content 'to leave the establishment of middle-class girls' schools' to the new school boards and therefore 'in the absence

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<sup>11</sup> Fletcher, *Feminists and bureaucrats*, 102

<sup>12</sup> Gurney, 'The establishment', 6



of a system' she once more called for 'voluntary effort' to create that missing female educational system.<sup>13</sup>

The second half of the article explained the secondary curriculum Gurney sought for girls. She argued that they 'only require the same instruction as boys in order to be able to complete successfully with them'. Therefore a modified 'classical education...we may call it a literary education' should be taught by masters until enough mistresses were trained. It would include mathematics, modern languages, and physical science as well as classics. Gurney did not object to mixed-sex secondary schooling and suggested that boys should have needle-work lessons rather than see that subject not taught at all. She did object strongly to girls being kept back by examinations, instead she felt they should be allowed to excel in some subjects. Mr Lowe's 'standard yearly examinations...clinging like a dead weight to every Government revised code, must never be allowed to creep up into higher schools'.<sup>14</sup> This was another view which may have been developed by her experience as a BFSS governor.

Gurney ended her article by advocating that the NLCS and the Camden School be used as models of how to run two grades of girls' secondary schools, equivalent to the first and second of the three grades proposed by the Taunton Report for the reform of boys' secondary schools. Gurney felt this modelling was particularly appropriate as from January 1871 the Camden schools were public schools under the control of trustees and no longer subject to the direction of Buss' private ownership. She detailed their organisation, including the access to them provided by the new railways. She argued that they had the advantages of being large enough to divide pupils into

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<sup>13</sup> Gurney, 'The establishment', 7 - 11

<sup>14</sup> Gurney, 'The establishment', 12 - 14

different ranges of age, to afford an adequate number of teachers, and to provide a contrast with domestic life which meant they could effectively train girls for a public role. As a final push for reform she called for ‘a circle of [girls’ high] schools in the suburbs around London...and in our country towns’ and complained about the existing lack of endowments for such a scheme in contrast to those available for boys’ education. Gurney’s full name was attached to the end of the article which appeared in the *EWB*.<sup>15</sup>

The early correspondence between Gurney, Buss, and Ridley also reflected Gurney’s developing capacity for leadership. In one of the letters she wrote of the problems they faced in constituting a central authority for future high schools and in finding more competent teachers than those in elementary schools. Nevertheless, Gurney ended that letter by writing that those problems ‘must be met with spirit’.<sup>16</sup> In November 1871 Buss wrote about a second and third meeting with Gurney. Buss revealed that Gurney had spoken of becoming a founding member of the WEU and of turning her paper into a pamphlet for publication by that body.<sup>17</sup> Buss also highlighted that Gurney had to ‘rush off’ to a separate conversation with Grey.<sup>18</sup>

The inauguration of the WEU in November 1871, with Payne as the chairman of its Central Committee, answered Gurney’s call for voluntary effort as the Union was designed to supplement and overtake the ESC’s work for female education.<sup>19</sup> Gurney became and stayed a member of its Central Committee until the WEU was disbanded in 1881. Of more importance to Gurney’s career, in 1872 the Union established the

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<sup>15</sup> Gurney, ‘The establishment’, 15 - 17

<sup>16</sup> Letter from M. Gurney to A. Ridley (no date), Ridley, *Buss*, 120

<sup>17</sup> Letter from F. Buss to A. Ridley (1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1871), Ridley, *Buss*, 122

<sup>18</sup> Journal-letter by F. Buss (18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1871), Ridley, *Buss*, 124

<sup>19</sup> Stocker, M. ‘Princess Louise’, *ODNB*

GPDSC. This was based on its second objective: ‘To promote the establishment of good Schools, at a moderate cost, for girls of all classes above those provided for by the Elementary Education Act’.<sup>20</sup> Above all others, it was this venture which facilitated Gurney’s rise to educational leadership within the women’s movement. Also, the intensity of her expanding network was demonstrated by the WEU’s and the GSC’s use of the same space for a head office until 1880.<sup>21</sup>

Despite Gurney’s desire to support the WEU’s second objective through writing as well as through committee work, in December 1871 she told Ridley that the task of adapting her previous paper was ‘very difficult’. Nevertheless, Gurney explained why she would persist with the task. She wrote: ‘I cannot say that she [Buss] has awakened any *new* enthusiasm in me, because an educational enthusiasm has always been a part of myself’.<sup>22</sup> In March 1872 the pamphlet was ready for distribution. Buss wrote to Gurney that ‘it seems to me that we cannot circulate your paper too widely... On all hands I hear how glad people are to have so clear a statement of our plans... Dr Hodgson says he has read your paper with great interest... *everyone* likes *your* pamphlet’.<sup>23</sup> Hodgson was another founder of the College of Preceptors and campaigner for female education.<sup>24</sup> Buss also wrote that: ‘Miss Gurney’s paper seems to be stirring up much interest’.<sup>25</sup> Thus, this leading reformer confirmed Gurney’s growing importance to the initial campaign for female secondary education.

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<sup>20</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) 32

<sup>21</sup> *Morning Post* (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1871); *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1881); Ridley, *Buss*, 124

<sup>22</sup> Letter from M. Gurney to A. Ridley (Dec. 1871), Ridley, *Buss*, 123

<sup>23</sup> Letter from F. Buss to M. Gurney (25<sup>th</sup> March 1872), Ridley, *Buss*, 123 - 124

<sup>24</sup> Hodgson, W. (1860) ‘The general education of women’, *English Woman’s Journal*, 5, 73 - 84 and Hodgson, W. (1864) ‘The education of girls in connexion with university local examinations’, *Victoria Magazine*, 3, 250 - 271, Hamilton and Schroeder, *Nineteenth-century British women’s education*, 61 - 72 and 107 - 128; Curthoys M. ‘W. B. Hodgson’, *ODNB*

<sup>25</sup> Letter from F. Buss (22<sup>nd</sup> March 187(2?)), Ridley, *Buss*, 135

Another article by Gurney, published early in 1873, also illustrated her transnational perspective as well as her fluency in the German language. In it she provided, from German periodicals, a summary of the discussions which took place at three 1872 conferences held abroad. The discussions were about the use of the principles behind the Froebel system of kindergartens in new German secondary schools for girls and about the tertiary education of women in new German training colleges.<sup>26</sup>

Gurney's next item in the *JWEU* replicated the indignant tone of her 1871 article in the *EWR*. In 1875 she forcefully pointed out the need to recognise that weaker examination results at women's training colleges may be the result of weaker teaching. Therefore, the results of men and women who shared the same teachers should be extracted from more generalised lists in order to create a more nuanced view on the matter.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, in this early phase of her work for the WEU Gurney signed an April 1876 memorial from the Union to the Charity Commission which, in January 1875, had taken over the work of the ESC. The memorial's theme was the omission of women to the governing bodies of those girls' schools which were newly, if inadequately, endowed. More than 30 others signed the memorial.<sup>28</sup> In it, the density of her expanding network was on show.

## ii

### Letters to the press

As well as having her views published by feminists, Gurney cautiously extended her experience and reputation as an educator by writing letters to elements of the English

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<sup>26</sup> Gurney, M. (1873) 'Educational conferences in Germany', *JWEU* 1 (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) 22 - 25

<sup>27</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1875) 26

<sup>28</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> April 1876) 54; *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> May 1876) 207

press which were less inclined to support feminism. At least fifteen of her letters were published between March 1871 and July 1875 in a variety of national newspapers and journals, including the *Examiner*, the *Daily News*, the *Times*, and the *Spectator*. Of course, she may have written many more before she was granted a public voice by their editors. Nevertheless, those fifteen continued her move from a localised platform onto the national stage and their publication in this more hostile space was another important milestone in her early career. Gurney seems to have recognised this too. She included copies of them, together, in one of the three albums of hundreds of press cuttings which she compiled on the growth, between 1871 and 1903, of female education across the world. Gurney identified them by writing in the index of the relevant album under the letter L: 'Letters (MG) 100-101-103-104' and by writing '(MG)' under the few letters in that album which did not contain her name or initials. On one of those four pages she also included a published review of her 1872 pamphlet.<sup>29</sup>

The letters were mostly about how endowments and scholarships available in London were not, in her view, adequately channelled towards female education at the secondary level. She had written about this perceived unequal distribution in her article and she did not reduce her complaints about it after 1871, despite the launch of the WEU. Her letter of November 1872 highlighted the failure of the ESC's scheme which planned to use Dulwich College's endowment to provide a first-grade secondary school for girls. Instead, only girls' second and third-grade secondary schools were provided.<sup>30</sup> In December 1872 she complained in another of her letters about the ESC's redirection of endowments in Battersea solely to boys' schools.<sup>31</sup> An angry

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<sup>29</sup> Gurney, album 1871 - 1875, 100 - 104; GDS3/8/36; GDS23/6/5 Early press cuttings, 1871 - 1877

<sup>30</sup> *Examiner* (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1872) London

<sup>31</sup> *Examiner* (21<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1872)

attack by Gurney on what she regarded as the misappropriation of money by the City Corporation was delivered in a further letter of April 1874. She asked why the promise of £5,000 for a middle-class girls' school was not kept and why, instead, the money was spent on the Corporation's middle-class boys' schools.<sup>32</sup> In July 1875 she was still monitoring the scheme for Dulwich and still highlighting in a letter its failure to provide a high school for girls.<sup>33</sup> Gurney also managed to incorporate into the December 1872 letter an advertisement for the GSC's first high school in Chelsea, due to be opened in the following month. She pointed out that it could be reached by railway from south London, although it was more desirable to provide the girls of Battersea with education in their own area. Two letters of September 1873 simply promoted the Chelsea school and the GSC's second school opened in Notting Hill.<sup>34</sup>

In November and December 1873 Gurney turned her attention to the allocation of scholarships. She argued in letters that the LSB restricted certain scholarships for secondary education to boys. She proposed as a solution that if those exclusively for boys continued to exist, then such scholarships should also exist exclusively for girls. She also put her argument into context by identifying as a precedent a new scholarship that was available to both sexes.<sup>35</sup> By February 1874 the solution she suggested was adopted by the WEU. Her letter of that month advertised the availability of a Union scholarship, for use at a GSC high school or the NLCS by LSB female pupils.<sup>36</sup> In May 1875 Gurney also explained in the press the provision of Union scholarships for study at GC.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Daily News* (14<sup>th</sup> April 1874) London

<sup>33</sup> *Daily News* (10<sup>th</sup> July 1875)

<sup>34</sup> *Daily News* (27<sup>th</sup>(?) Sept. 1873); *Examiner* and *Times* (29<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1873) London

<sup>35</sup> *Examiner* (26<sup>th</sup> Nov. and 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1873)

<sup>36</sup> *Times* (Feb. 1874)

<sup>37</sup> *Daily News* (21<sup>st</sup> May 1875)

Meanwhile, 1872 to 1874 saw her involved in other educational controversies. Her letters of March 1872 and February 1873 focussed on the cost to middle-class education and ratepayers of financing the boarding-out of workhouse children and their attendance at industrial schools.<sup>38</sup> Then in May 1874 she entered into the debate on the effect of intellectual work on the health of girls. She cited the contents of essays on the subject recently published in America which, to her mind, illustrated that there was no justification in believing academic study was harmful to females.<sup>39</sup> Once again Gurney's transnational knowledge of education was on view to the reading public.

In contrast, her first and thirteenth published letters were connected to her uncontroversial work for the BFSS. Nevertheless, they too had a tone of exasperation. Gurney's March 1871 letter concerned the elementary schools' curriculum established by William Forster, vice-president of the Education Department.<sup>40</sup> She criticised the errors she felt had been made in an article previously published about Forster's Code. She also defended the educational record of denominational elementary schools, particularly those of the BFSS. This first letter was anonymously signed: 'A secretary of a British school' and demonstrated both her initial willingness to engage with public debate but also her initial reluctance to be unequivocally identified by the public eye.

Over time this contradictory approach to publicity mostly disappeared. In March 1872 at the end of her second letter she identified herself as 'MG' and in November 1872 she signed her third letter with 'Mary Gurney'.<sup>41</sup> Nine other letters had her name clearly printed at the end of them. Only once more, in February 1873, did she use just

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<sup>38</sup> *Examiner* (30<sup>th</sup> March 1872 and 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1873)

<sup>39</sup> *Spectator* (4<sup>th</sup> May 1874) London

<sup>40</sup> *Examiner* (25<sup>th</sup> March 1871); Warren, A. 'W. Forster', *ODNB*

<sup>41</sup> *Examiner* (30<sup>th</sup> March 1872 and 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1872)

her initials.<sup>42</sup> Of the two remaining letters, one was sent in February 1874 under Payne's name as chairman of the WEU, although she identified it in the album as her letter. The other in May 1874 was sent under the guise of 'An advocate of higher education'.<sup>43</sup> Her adoption of anonymity again suggests that she was still prey to pressure when challenging the status quo. Emily Davies recommended caution when faced with those tensions.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Gurney may have felt that a letter which ended with a male name or without a gendered name was more likely to be published in certain parts of the press. Gurney was possibly also reflecting her struggle with diffidence, a characteristic which Ridley and Magnus felt she possessed.<sup>45</sup>

In July 1874 she again signed herself as a secretary of an elementary school but that time she confidently added her full name and gave the name of the school. It concerned what she regarded as the unfair needlework examination which only girls had to pass in order to be considered for a LSB secondary school scholarship. She also began the letter with the words: 'As a manager of an elementary school'.<sup>46</sup> Her perception of herself as a woman working in the business of education and therefore justified in her view was clearly expressed in that introduction. Gurney was becoming more skilled in the craft of reform.

When viewed as a group these letters of 1871 to 1875 and her other publications of 1871 to 1876 reflected her considerable literacy, capacity for research, grasp of detail, unconventionality, and strength of belief in her own arguments, as well as her anger with educational differences based on gender, avoidance of stereotypical

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<sup>42</sup> *Examiner* (23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1873)

<sup>43</sup> *Times* (Feb.(?) 1874); *Spectator* (4<sup>th</sup> May 1874)

<sup>44</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 83 - 84

<sup>45</sup> Ridley, *Buss*, 19; Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 1; see chapter 2.1.iii

<sup>46</sup> *School Board Chronicle* (11<sup>th</sup> July 1874), London



judgement, confident use of direct action, and transnational perspective. They also reflected her class prejudice, intolerance of incompetence, frustration at others' incapacity to change, tendency to promote evidence without question, insistence on precise detail, and fear when venturing beyond the comfort zone of her networked relationships and spaces. Together they show some of the challenges she did and did not overcome during her apprenticeship in educational leadership.

3

### The GPDSC Council

i

‘a circle of schools...around London...and in our country towns’<sup>47</sup>

It was mainly through the gradual creation and nurture of 37 GST high schools and one middle school over 45 years that Gurney became an important leader of female education. The lessons Gurney learned about how to open and run high schools from the 1870s to the 1890s were a vital part of that journey. Her first two decades as a key policy-maker and administrator of the Company were testing-grounds. They provided Gurney with the experience and resilience to go on into the 1900s increasing her influence within the Company and within female education in general. Of course, it could be argued that as each school developed her work became more familiar and therefore easier. However, it is also clear that Gurney's responsibilities grew with the start of each new school and that this lessened any reduction in the challenges she faced.

This crucial work began in 1872 when the WEU's Central Committee, of which Gurney was a member, responded to her call to no longer wait for the ESC or the

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<sup>47</sup> Gurney, 'The establishment', 17

British state to enact change. Instead, it created the limited company known as the GPDSC.<sup>48</sup> Shares were issued which slowly financed the opening of individual schools. At the start, the Company's nominal capital was £12,000, which was the equivalent in today's terms of just over £1.35 million. This rose to £200,000 by 1901, which was the equivalent in today's terms of just over £24.75 million.<sup>49</sup> All but one of these schools became known as high schools because of their first grade status as providers of entry to university level study after the age of 18. The exception was known as a middle school because of its second grade status based on its lower leaving age and lower fees. Nevertheless, the more numerous high schools also charged fees which it was believed the middle class could afford. All of the schools were meant to be self-financing after the initial costs of buildings and equipment were covered by the GSC. Furthermore, the schools were established only in areas where demand was proved by a request from a locality and the purchase of an adequate amount of shares.

In contrast to the lack of control over the schools' siting, size, and speed of foundation, the Company tightly controlled the schools' academic work and the employment of their staff. This was done through one governing body based in the GSC's head office in central London. With the help of committees and sub-committees, this body, known as the Council, created policy and supervised its administration. The process was guided by the Company's growing set of regulations. There were 56 by 1874.<sup>50</sup> Although each school was allowed a local committee to assist its establishment and advise the headmistress in later years, an 1881 survey of fifteen of these committees revealed that they had very limited or no powers. One

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<sup>48</sup> GDS1/1/1 - 6 Memoranda and articles of association

<sup>49</sup> Inflation calculator; for a copy of page 25 of the GSC's share ledger listing Gurney's earliest shareholding in the Company see fig. 4.2 at the end of this chapter

<sup>50</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 (10<sup>th</sup> May 1875 - 27<sup>th</sup> June 1877) 1 - 176, with attached GPDSC regulations booklet (1874)

replied: 'The Company has the entire control'. Even information on the efficiency of a school could be held back, as occurred in 1877 when the local committee of Bath High School made a request for such knowledge.<sup>51</sup> This centralisation had the potential to aggravate as well as support the schools. Nevertheless, Kay-Shuttleworth commented on its necessity in a memorandum of July 1874. He stated that it was expedient to co-ordinate the management of all the schools, especially as they became more distant from the meeting-place of the Council.<sup>52</sup> Gurney, still training as a leader, had the opportunity to heed the views of this experienced educator.

Despite the stated ambitions of the GSC only three schools were opened in 1873 and 1874. Nevertheless, six more Company schools were opened in 1875 and thirteen more by the end of 1880. However, that considerable pace over six years was not repeated and it took until 1901 to open the last sixteen. Initially the schools were mostly sited in domestic houses which were rented or bought with mortgages, they mostly employed only a few assistant mistresses under a headmistress, and they mostly opened with a relatively small number of pupils. Chelsea High School started with twenty pupils.<sup>53</sup> Wimbledon High School began with only twelve pupils. Moreover, the teaching staff including the headmistresses were often only in their twenties, although it was preferred that they had attended one of the few new university colleges for women. Edith Hastings, headmistress of Nottingham High School, was only 24 when she was appointed in 1876.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> GDS11/1/5 Letter concerning the local committees of the high schools, 1881; GDS6/2/2 (27<sup>th</sup> July 1875 - 16<sup>th</sup> October 1877), (7<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1877) 92

<sup>52</sup> Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 45

<sup>53</sup> GDS13/11/2 Chelsea High School log book, 1

<sup>54</sup> Hastings M. (1931) *Reminiscences 1876 - 1889*, WHS archive (1993)

These early challenges altered as the years passed. The number of pupils and staff grew at each site and their buildings improved through renovation or replacement with purpose-built accommodation. Thus, by June 1902 just over 50,000 girls had attended the schools which spread from Newcastle in the north-east of England to Newton Abbot in its south-west and across to Swansea in Wales.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, before that year only four of the 38 in total failed to thrive under Gurney's and the Company's administration. That so many of them survived their early years was in part a testimony to her business skills. However, the GSC's 30 years of expansion from 1872 to 1902 ended as the state entered into the provision of secondary education. Then, for the duration of Gurney's career no new schools were opened and nine failed to thrive. Worse still, the years just before the Great War saw the GST, which replaced the Company after 1905, edge towards bankruptcy, a situation it did not easily overcome.<sup>56</sup>

Overall, Gurney oversaw the start of 38 schools and the loss of thirteen. It can be said that as an entrepreneur she experienced a reasonable success-rate across 45 years, at the same time as learning that the business of providing girls with an academic education was precarious. Also, it may have been some consolation to her that only five failed completely as the other eight merged with surviving GST schools or schools run by other educational bodies. However, in contrast she did not live to see the Trust slowly recover in the 1920s from the brink of extinction and her final years of work for the organisation did not provide her with any certainty that it would do so.

## ii

### Presence and voice

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<sup>55</sup> Sondheimer and Bodington, *The GPDST 1872 - 1972*, 29

<sup>56</sup> GDS1/3/1 Papers relating to reorganisation for receipt of grants; also see chapter 6.4.ii

In June 1872 meetings of the GSC's provisional Council, under Kay-Shuttleworth's chairmanship, were held. The Company's regulations were agreed and plans were made for the first school. Gurney, with Kay-Shuttleworth, Payne, Grey, Shirreff, Stanley, George Bartley, and Charles Roundell made up this body and Gurney, with all of them except Roundell, signed the GSC's Articles of Association. In October 1872 these eight councillors took part in the first meeting of the permanent Council at the Westminster Palace Hotel in London. They were joined by Douglas Galton and Henrietta Baden-Powell, as well as by four other men. By 1873 Roundell had become the Council's 'chairman [sic]' and three more men and one more woman had joined it. The latter was Lucy Cavendish, daughter of Lyttelton. This balance of six women to twelve men was based on the second regulation of the Company. It stated that of the twelve to eighteen members required in that body 'at least one-third shall be women'. Instead one-half was reached: such were the innovative and conservative natures of this Victorian enterprise.<sup>57</sup>

From the start Gurney made her presence known not just as a signatory to the Articles but also in the Council's fortnightly meetings. From June 1872 to May 1875 she was present at 63 of those meetings out of a total of 76. This 83% attendance rate was greater than that of any other councillor. The other signatories attended between 38 and 60 meetings. For example, Grey was present on 48 occasions. In view of his chairmanship, it is remarkable that Roundell was present on only 43 occasions and Payne instead often acted as chairman. One of the consequences of Gurney's regular presence was that occasionally she was the only woman at a meeting. For instance, in April 1874 she was present with only Kay-Shuttleworth and four other men. This

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<sup>57</sup> GDS3/3/1 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1872) 1, with attached regulations booklet 3 (1<sup>st</sup> July 1873); *Freeman's Journal* (23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1872); Warren, A. 'R. Baden-Powell', *ODNB*; [www.gracesguide.co.uk/Douglas Strutt Galton](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Douglas_Strutt_Galton) (last accessed Nov. 2018)

notable rate of work did not falter as the 1870s came to an end. From 1878 to 1887 she was present at all but one Council meeting in six of those years and in four her attendance rate was 100%.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, by 1904 no other founder was working with her on the Council and she still had more than a decade of membership ahead of her. Between 1876 and 1897 Payne, Kay-Shuttleworth, Stanley, and Shirreff ended their work for the GSC and the Shirreff sisters' work as councillors was affected by ill health even in the 1870s. Lastly, Roundell left the governing body in 1898 and Bartley in 1903.<sup>59</sup> A consequence of the comparative longevity of Gurney's presence was that her experience of the Company's affairs often surpassed most other councillors. Also, over time she was more important to the Company's policy-making and administration than Grey, despite the older woman's greater reputation within GST historiography.

The founding councillors' attendance rate at the Company's Annual and Extraordinary General Meetings followed a similar pattern. Between 1872 and 1893 Gurney was present at twenty-six of the twenty-nine public meetings and only Stanley's and Roundell's attendance rates came near to equalling that of Gurney. In contrast, Shirreff attended on eleven occasions and Grey on nine, while Payne and Kay-Shuttleworth attended on even less. In addition, again after 1904 Gurney was the only founding councillor present and it was not until the 1910s that her attendance rate slightly faltered. A consequence of Gurney's regular presence in the 1870s and 1880s was that her tolerance of public scrutiny and capacity for public speaking had a chance to develop.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> GDS3/3/1 - 13 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1872 - Dec. 1887)

<sup>59</sup> GDS3/3/1 - 28 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1872 - Dec. 1904); Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 26 - 31

<sup>60</sup> GDS4/1/1 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1872 - 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1903); GDS4/1/2 (Feb. 1904 - March 1920)

Despite Gurney's status as a founder of the Company and her notable record regarding the Council's private and public meetings, she never became that governing body's permanent chairman. Roundell stepped down from the position in 1877 and William Stone took the role until 1896. He was replaced by William Bousfield until 1910 and then by John Northcote until 1920. These promotions reflected the Victorian and Edwardian preference for male figureheads and power as well as these men's business skills and knowledge. Indeed, none of the four female founders ever became the public face of the Company as its permanent chairman. Nevertheless, alone among the four women, in August and September from 1878 to 1881 Gurney was temporary vice-chairman and could act for the chairman. This appointment illustrated one way in which she gradually expanded her leadership skills during the early decades of her career.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, even before 1878 Gurney attempted to guide policy through proposing and seconding motions to the Council for resolution. She was as keen to make her voice heard as her presence felt during the meetings of that governing body. Across the five years from June 1872 to July 1877 Gurney pursued 68 policy recommendations. In contrast, Stanley was involved in 53, Kay-Shuttleworth in 49, Roundell and Bartley in 36, Payne in 25, and Shirreff in 24. Cavendish, who joined the Council in 1873, put forward or supported only fifteen. The comparative lack of activity by three of the men may be explained by the pressure of their work outside of the Company. In October 1873 Payne tendered his resignation from the Council citing that reason, although in the end he remained a councillor until his death three years later.<sup>62</sup> Only Grey, who was involved in 139 motions, made a greater attempt to direct

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<sup>61</sup> GDS/3/3/4 (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1878); GDS3/3/5 (30<sup>th</sup> July 1879) 84; GDS3/3/6 (21<sup>st</sup> July 1880) 73; GDS3/3/7 (20<sup>th</sup> July 1881)

<sup>62</sup> GDS3/3/1 (21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1873) 277

the schools during the company's first five years, despite her lower attendance rate at meetings.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, after that initial period and as the older woman succumbed to illness, Gurney's involvement in policy-making far surpassed that of Grey. Indeed, for the next 40 years Gurney made or supported hundreds of proposals to the Council as to how the high schools should be run. This work involved research, planning, and at times difficult execution. Councillors were required to give notice of their intentions at a previous meeting and after 1878 this had to be in writing 28 days before the next meeting. Gurney also had to prepare for the objections other councillors might have to her ideas: 'questioned very strongly', 'long and animated discussion', and 'warmly contested' were the phrases used by the Company minute-takers to describe the arguments surrounding the potential resolutions.<sup>64</sup> Despite this, as she became more used to working at a national level Gurney proposed policies across a range of issues from the schools' opening, financing, building, and maintenance to their curricula, examinations, inspection, and the appointment of their staff. In addition, when her own or others' proposals were accepted, she often went on to supervise their enactment or carry them out herself, using as an aid circulars to the headmistresses which she helped formulate.

Some specific examples of Gurney's motions to the Council from 1873 to 1880 give a sense of how vital she became to the Company's expansion and survival in its early years and how this work acted for her as a challenging apprenticeship in educational governance. For instance, she was involved in the uncertain preparations

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<sup>63</sup> GDS3/3/1 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1872 - 7<sup>th</sup> May 1874) 1 - 368; GDS3/3/2 (21<sup>st</sup> May 1874 - 11<sup>th</sup> July 1877) 1 - 338

<sup>64</sup> GDS3/3/1 (27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1872) 111 and (25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1873) 155; GDS/3/3/4 (17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1878) 112; GDS6/2/1 (25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1872) 19



for the opening by January 1873 of Chelsea High School in Durham House on Durham Place. The employment of Porter as headmistress was not easily achieved. Nevertheless, Gurney's drive was such that in February 1873 she called for the immediate establishment of either a second or third grade girls secondary school near to this initial first grade one. Payne had already successfully argued that the Company was bound to establish such alternatives for middle-class girls. However, Gurney's expansion proposal met with opposition and she withdrew it 'for the present'.<sup>65</sup> Instead, she involved herself in plans for another first grade school. By July 1873 she pushed for the purchase of a suitable house and thus made it possible to open Notting Hill and Bayswater High School two months later, with Harriet Jones as its headmistress. Then in March 1874 Gurney and Kay-Shuttleworth worked together for the sale of shares so that a third high school, this time in Croydon, could be opened later in that year.

Gurney's growing influence was also on show in January 1874 when she insisted that the letting of a property owned by the Company should raise no less than £50 per annum and in February 1874 when her proposal was accepted that the Company pay the fees of its student-teachers who attended Payne's course of lectures on pedagogy. Other influential proposals were put forward in April 1876. She successfully argued for a school to serve the Highbury and Islington district and identified a building for the new school in Brighton. Then in June 1876 she gained acceptance for her idea of new buildings in Croydon and Norwich, while in October 1876 she pushed for physical improvements to Notting Hill and Bayswater High School. As a last example of her early policy-making, in December 1878 her scheme for the appointment of a

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<sup>65</sup> GDS3/3/1 (4<sup>th</sup> July 1872), (14<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) 142, (4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1873, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1873, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873) 151 - 169; Hunt, F. 'M. Porter', *ODNB*

Visiting Officer to inspect and report on all the Company's high schools was accepted by the Council.<sup>66</sup>

4

The GPDSC committees

i

Consolidation of influence

In the 1870s, as a result of her membership of the Council, Gurney also became a member of many of its committees and their sub-committees. The Council delegated work to these bodies but kept the power to oversee and veto their decisions. Indeed, at least 27 of them were formed before 1884, although this pace slowed after that year. In total at least 32 were formed from 1872 to 1909. Records were kept of their meetings covering thousands of pages of Victorian and Edwardian minute books. Gurney's membership of some lasted much longer than that of others because the Company learned which could be disbanded, due to their single-issue nature, and which were essential to its efficiency. Hence, some met only on a few occasions but others went on meeting regularly between once a week and once a month for decades. It took the Company up to 1884 to form a stable core of five key committees which went on to survive for the rest of Gurney's career. She was a founding member of all of them and remained a member for between 33 and 45 years. They were known as the Finance Committee, the Education Committee, the Sites and Building Committee, the Teachers Committee, and the Examinations and Studies Committee. In the 1890s and 1900s she became permanent chairman of the second, fourth and fifth. However, in the 1870s and 1880s the preference for male chairmen also extended to the

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<sup>66</sup> GDS3/3/1 (29<sup>th</sup> July 1873) 248 - 249, (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1874) 331 - 2, (5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1874) 339 - 340, (5<sup>th</sup> March 1874) 347; GDS3/3/2 (6<sup>th</sup> April 1876) 209, (1<sup>st</sup> June 1876) 224, (22<sup>nd</sup> June 1876) 230, (1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1876) 263; GDS3/3/4 (17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1878) 114

committee level of the GSC's bureaucracy, so at first the Council chairmen led them. It took several decades for Gurney's business acumen and leadership skills to gain full expression in the key committees but she used those decades effectively by building a deep and granular understanding of the GSC's affairs through them.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, the committees and sub-committees were another space where her presence and voice developed. Across the years she moved or supported hundreds more proposals in them. In addition, she began to write reports to accompany her recommendations to the Council and once again, when committee proposals became Council approved policies, she often supervised their administration or carried them out herself. This involved her in the creation of further circulars to the schools. More importantly, Gurney's joint membership of sub-committees, committees, and the Council provided her with the opportunity to push her views up through the Company's hierarchy of governing bodies to the point of acceptance as policy. This distinct lack of a separation of powers within the organisation's governance probably assisted the growth of Gurney's influence over its affairs. It allowed for the creation of a borderland between non-professional and professional procedure in which vertical and horizontal networking could develop. This would have been much to her advantage as a Company power-broker and it leaves the impression Gurney had a touch of the *éminence grise* about her.

Some specific examples of her early committee work give the same sense of her vitality and training as those from her early Council work. Indeed, all of her 45 years of committee work give a sense of how her labour for the Company became the most important part of her career. A remarkable weekly account of it can be extracted from

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<sup>67</sup> GDS6/2/1 - GDS6/7/4, (19<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1872 - 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1916); GDS17/4/3 (12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1910 - 5<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1917)

the GST's records, although it is not possible to bring all of that account to light within the confines of this thesis. Nevertheless, once read, the records provide a picture of her slow, arduous, yet definite alteration from an inexperienced but determined educator to that of a knowledgeable and powerful one.

ii

Earliest committees

In June 1872 Gurney, Grey, Payne, and Stanley formed the Council's earliest committee. It was created to find the GSC's first headmistress and assistant mistress. The value of networking was evident in their decision over the former. They resorted to 'private enquiries' after advertising failed to work and, in particular, they sought the advice of Clifton College's headmaster. Finally, an agreement was made with Porter who in the 1860s had been a member of the Kensington Society, assisted Emily Davies in the campaign to open local examinations to girls, and as a headmistress of her own school had been one of the nine women along with Davies, Buss, and Beale who had given evidence to the SIC.<sup>68</sup> By September 1872 Gurney was also on the second committee with Grey, Bartley, and another councillor called William Barber. It was named the School Committee to distinguish it and it formulated a procedure for the appointment and dismissal of future assistant mistresses. In addition, by November 1873 Gurney was on the Standing Committee for New Schools and the Executive Committee on Meetings which was created to organise the Company's expanding bureaucracy. Her desire to be at the centre of the Company's diverse and unpredictable affairs was further reflected in her membership of many other short-lived bodies, such

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<sup>68</sup> GDS3/3/1 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1872, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1872, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1872) 1 - 32

as one working in 1875 to create, in a contradictory manner, boarding houses to assist the growth of the GSC's new day schools.<sup>69</sup>

iii

### Finance

These early years were also a time when the patterns of her future responsibilities began to set. By July 1873 Gurney was working on the first of what became the five important bodies of the Trust during her career: the new Finance Committee. After 1877 it met mostly twice a month on Tuesday afternoon, although by the 1900s that had tended to change to Wednesday afternoon. On twelve occasions between June 1874 and April 1875 Gurney examined and questioned the expenditures of the individual schools right down to the cost of coal. In that same period, on six occasions, Shirreff also carried out this solitary work but Grey did not do so.<sup>70</sup> Even in the 1870s Gurney involved herself more closely with the Company's financial affairs than the three other female founders. Indeed, of the six members elected to the Finance Committee in March 1876 for the coming year, Gurney was the only woman. Also, between October 1877 and May 1880 Gurney was present in 48 of its 53 meetings, a frequency of 91% only just surpassed by the new chairman of both the Council and this committee. Stone attended 51 of those meetings. Of the other six founding councillors still alive, Stanley attended seventeen, Shirreff three, and Bartley two. However, Grey and Roundell were never present. Gurney's mental and physical stamina provided crucial support for the fledgling high schools in their first decade.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> GDS3/3/1 (9<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1872, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1872, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1872) 32 - 122, (1<sup>st</sup> July 1873) 222; GDS6/2/1 (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1873) 49; GDS3/3/2 (17<sup>th</sup> March 1875) 116

<sup>70</sup> GDS3/3/2 (1<sup>st</sup> July 1873) 222; GDS6/2/1 (30<sup>th</sup> June 1874 - 6<sup>th</sup> April 1875)

<sup>71</sup> GDS6/4/1 (16<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1877 - 12<sup>th</sup> May 1880) 1 - 330

Also, beyond the sanctioning and paying for all the schools' purchases and the signing of salary cheques every term, in this committee Gurney developed her knowledge of more complex business practice. The money from the sale of shares, the fees paid and not paid by the pupils' parents, the income from the Company's investments, and the mortgages raised to purchase buildings came under its care. For instance, in May 1878 Gurney, Stone, and Galton negotiated a mortgage for Ipswich High School and in February 1880 they and Stanley approved one for Croydon High School. Gurney was also involved in the decision of January 1879 to pay a dividend of five per cent and in the call for a new issue of shares. In addition, she was a participant in March 1879 discussions about investments the Company, using its reserve fund, needed to make.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, in the late 1870s Gurney had the opportunity to become familiar with the Company's balance sheets and statements of accounts, as certified by outside auditors, at the start of each year.<sup>73</sup>

In contrast, headmistresses were not given financial power and they were called to account if they exercised it. In June and July 1878 Rebecca Allen Olney of St John's Wood High School had her attention drawn to the 'rule that accounts be sent to the office for payment' and she was requested to meet the Education Committee 'with reference to her school stationery bills'.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, in April 1880 Gurney faced a reminder of how important her careful financial control was to the survival of the new high schools. With Stone and Stanley, she had to seek a loan of £5,000, which was the equivalent in today's terms of just over £600,000, from the Company's bankers until the next term's fees were collected. Also, in response to the precarious nature of the schools' solvency, in 1883 she proposed the closure of the individual high schools

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<sup>72</sup> GDS6/4/1 (8<sup>th</sup> May 1878) 77, (21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1879) 153, (5<sup>th</sup> March 1879) 161 (18<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1880) 286

<sup>73</sup> GDS6/4/1 (22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1878) 39, (7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1879) 151, (21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1879) 279

<sup>74</sup> GDS6/4/1 (4<sup>th</sup> June 1878, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1878) 84

which were still not ‘self-supporting’ even after the introduction of lower fees and redundancies.<sup>75</sup>

The financial welfare of the GST remained an over-riding concern of Gurney throughout her career and, while she never became the Finance Committee’s permanent chairman, she did become its temporary chairman during the summer months of 1903, 1905, and 1908 - 1909. Her concern was such that in 1895 Gurney was the only woman on a sub-committee with Stone, Roundell, Bartley, and Galton which reluctantly raised the high schools’ fees. Also, by 1899 Gurney was discussing the idea of a clause in the mistresses’ contracts which prevented them from opening a school within a certain distance of a Company school. By 1906 this idea was adopted, despite complaints against it which were rejected by the Council. Indeed, Gurney did not resign from the Finance Committee until sometime between 1914 and 1916.<sup>76</sup> More than her work for any other committee, her work for it demonstrated how far she was a Victorian woman of business.

iv

#### Education

By May 1875 Gurney was a member of the second of the five bodies which came to dominate the Trust’s bureaucracy during her time with the GST: the new Education Committee. Such was its importance, it was called ‘in particular’ into existence by the Council and required to meet under the chairmanship of Roundell two or three times a month, usually on Wednesday afternoon after 1879.<sup>77</sup> Of the 51 Education Committee meetings held between May 1875 and June 1877 Gurney attended 44 or

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<sup>75</sup> GDS6/4/1 (7<sup>th</sup> April 1880) 300; GDS3/3/9 (21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1883) 24; inflation calculator

<sup>76</sup> GDS6/4/2 - 6 (11<sup>th</sup> March 1903 - 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1913); GDS3/3/20 (20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1894) 3; GDS3/3/21 (22<sup>nd</sup> May 1895) 59; GDS3/3/25 (31<sup>st</sup> May 1899) 64 - 65; GDS6/4/4 (18<sup>th</sup> July 1906)

<sup>77</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 attached regulations booklet 5

86%. In contrast, Stanley attended 39, Roundell 35, Grey 30, and Shirreff only 12. Between July 1877 and June 1882 there were another 130 meetings held. Gurney attended 125 or 96% and Stone, its next chairman, 111. However, Shirreff was only present on 31 occasions and Grey on 11. Again, some of the female founders' attendance rates were markedly different. Nevertheless, during these years Gurney was only once granted the role of temporary chairman, at a meeting in July 1880.<sup>78</sup>

An important part of Gurney's policy-making and administration within this body was connected to examinations and inspections. For instance, in 1876 she controlled all the schools' use of external examination papers and in late 1878 she was involved in the choice of who should be recommended to the Council for the new post of GSC school inspector. Despite conflicting with Roundell and Stone over this, she continued to establish the procedures this Visiting Officer would use. She also established by early 1879 the format the headmistresses' annual reports to the Council had to take.<sup>79</sup> Then in April 1879 Gurney was given the responsibility of summarising those February reports, with their sixteen categories, into a single report for the Education Committee and of bringing relevant matters from them to the attention of the Sites and Building Committee. In April 1880 and 1881 she was asked to carry out the same task and 'Miss Gurney's notes upon them' were considered. This was the beginning of an annual spring-time responsibility for Gurney which she carried out until the 1910s.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 (10<sup>th</sup> May 1875 - 27<sup>th</sup> June 1877) 1 - 176; GDS6/3/1/2 (18<sup>th</sup> July 1877 - 14<sup>th</sup> June 1882) 1 - 301 and (28<sup>th</sup> July 1880) 202

<sup>79</sup> GDS6/2/2 (7<sup>th</sup> June 1876) 53 - 58; GDS6/3/1/1 (21<sup>st</sup> July 1876) 120; GDS3/3/4 (17<sup>th</sup> Dec 1878) 114; GDS6/3/1/2 (21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1878 - 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1879)

<sup>80</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (23<sup>rd</sup> April 1879, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1880, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1881); for a discussion of Gurney's continuing work for the Education Committee, other key committees, and the Council up to the 1910s see chapter 6.2.ii



Other examples of Gurney's examination and inspection work within the Education Committee also help explain why she eventually became this body's permanent chairman from 1897 to 1913. In October 1879 she was asked 'to revise the quotations' from examiners' reports before they went into reports to the schools' local committees and in December 1879 she was asked to draft a special report on the results of the schools in Brighton and Hackney. In addition, she often wrote to headmistresses or invited them to meet the committee about examination results. For example, it was decided in July 1880, when Gurney temporarily acted as chairman, that she 'was to communicate with Miss Pearse [of Hackney High School] on the matters as to which the Committee wish to see her'. Also, in January 1881 'Miss Wills' of Norwich High School had her attention drawn to 'poor results' in Algebra.<sup>81</sup> Later, in October 1881 Gurney was the only woman appointed to the sub-committee required to confer with secretaries from the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Board, also known as the Joint Board. In January 1882 she attended that meeting.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, in November 1880 Gurney, with three others, was elected to the sub-committee appointed to review the school libraries. Together they compiled lists of non-fiction books under thirteen headings which the schools were permitted to own. Some were by J. S. Mill, Matthew Arnold, Harriet Martineau and Millicent Garrett Fawcett. These choices reflected Gurney's liberalism, feminism, and networking. However, they also reflected the strength of her centralised control over the schools. This tension ran through much of her governance of the GST: she wished to see middle-class women and girls develop their intellects and skills but preferred not to

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<sup>81</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1879, 10<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1879, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1880, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1881) 156 - 230

<sup>82</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (12<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1881, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1882) 251 - 267

give the headmistresses and their charges too much freedom over how they developed them when at work and study within the organisation.<sup>83</sup>

Another crucial part of her work for the Education Committee was concerned with the appointment, management, and payment of the teaching staff. In late 1876 she was 'requested' to draw up a scheme to differentiate the salaries of the teachers. To assist this task the headmistresses were asked for details of all the assistant mistresses' ages, qualifications, experience, length of service, and present salary. In February 1877 the Education Committee accepted Gurney's scheme. It divided the teachers into three classes based on their qualifications and experience. Several potential annual salaries were then suggested for each of them. However, when that committee recommended the adoption of it as an experiment for three years, the Council did not immediately agree. In March 1877, during the delay in the scheme's implementation, Gurney 'suggested' that the headmistresses were asked for their comments.<sup>84</sup> Also, by that month a sub-committee for teachers' salaries had also been created involving Gurney, Roundell, and Stanley. This group continued to recommend the scheme to the Council but it was still not put into practice and some alterations were made in June 1877.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, it was discussed again by the Education Committee in May, June and July 1878.<sup>86</sup> In the autumn of that year it was referred to a new sub-committee for the classification of teachers which, in addition, dealt with recommendations for teachers' promotions. Only Gurney, Stone, and 'H. Weston Eve', who had helped Gurney create the scheme, were members of this body and they decided to accede to the headmistresses' request that their staff would not be informed of their classifications.

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<sup>83</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1880) 214 - 220

<sup>84</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 (13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1876, 29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1876, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1877, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1877) 130 - 162

<sup>85</sup> GDS6/2/2 (28<sup>th</sup> March 1877) 101 - 102; GDS6/3/1/1 (4<sup>th</sup> June 1877) 171 - 172

<sup>86</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (23<sup>rd</sup> May 1878, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1878, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1878) 65 - 75

By January 1879 that sub-committee had convinced the Council, via the Education Committee, that the experiment should start for 113 teachers.<sup>87</sup>

The creation and initial operation of the scheme demonstrated how Gurney gained a comprehensive knowledge of the Company's staff. It further demonstrated her centralised and systematic approach to their employment. Moreover, her presence on all the bodies involved in the decision-making was a clear example of how her career was assisted by the lack of a separation of powers within the Company. As the scheme's introduction passed slowly through the GSC's layers of bureaucracy Gurney had the opportunity to test her horizontal and vertical networking powers and to expand her leadership skills to a greater extent than was previously possible. The whole enterprise from 1876 to 1879, together with her early work on the headmistresses' spring reports from 1879 to 1881, can be seen as two further landmarks in her apprenticeship.

v

### Sites and Building

By January 1877 Gurney was also a member of what became for her the third key body: the new Sites and Building Committee. The work of that new committee was not unfamiliar. From 1872 to 1876 some of her work on the Council and General Purposes Committee was a preparation for it. For instance, in June 1875 Gurney, with Roundell and Stanley, sought suitable premises for the new school planned for Oxford and dealt with the delay to the opening of new school buildings in Hackney. Then, in November 1875 she dealt with concern over the safety of the water supply at Chelsea High School and in April 1876 supervised the building work at Norwich High School

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<sup>87</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1878, 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1878, 19<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1878, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1879, 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1879)

and at Clapham Middle School, before being given the ‘power’ in May of that year to sanction the building of new premises in Brighton after she was satisfied with the architect’s plans. Lastly, just as the Sites and Building Committee was coming into being, Gurney was in an emergency sub-committee dealing with what were considered the hazardous buildings in Clapham.<sup>88</sup>

From October 1877 to January 1886 Gurney was present at 116 of the new committee’s 126 meetings. Stone, its first chairman, was present on 118 occasions and thus very slightly exceeded her 92% attendance rate. However, Stanley only attended 81 meetings and Bartley only 31, while Grey and Shirreff were never members of this important body. After 1880 it met about once a month on a Wednesday afternoon, rather than fortnightly on a Tuesday afternoon, but it held ‘special’ meetings whenever necessary. In a fifth of the meetings between 1877 and 1886 Gurney was the only female present. Also, on occasion only Gurney and Stone met, although sometimes they were joined by Galton who became the committee’s second chairman in 1883.<sup>89</sup> These exclusive combinations of personnel spoke of her engagement with the work and how her capacity to supervise the GSC’s infrastructure was respected. Indeed, Gurney’s attendance at 98 or 85% of the 115 meetings from February 1886 to December 1898 exceeded the second chairman’s attendance at 90. In addition, there was a notable increase, to just over a third, in the meetings where she was the only female.<sup>90</sup> In the 1900s the next chairman of the committee, Buxton Morrish, and the next chairman of the Council, Bousfield, continued their predecessors’ habit of

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<sup>88</sup> GDS3/3/2 (4<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1877) 276, (13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1877) 286; GDS6/2/1 (29<sup>th</sup> June 1875); GDS6/2/2 (15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1875, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1876), (11<sup>th</sup> May 1876) 52, (6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1876) 81

<sup>89</sup> GDS6/5/1/1 (16<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1877 - 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1886) 1 - 330

<sup>90</sup> GDS6/5/1/2 (10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1886 - 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1898) 1 - 329

meeting with Gurney alone. That decade also saw her exceed their presence at the committee's meetings.<sup>91</sup>

Not unreasonably, at times Gurney was required to leave the confines of the London head office to inspect GST land and property. At those times, her material and mental working space were both nation-wide and she was able to reinforce control of the headmistresses. Indeed, from 1879 the committee's meetings were sometimes held in the London schools, although the purpose of most of her visits to the high schools remained either physical or academic inspection.<sup>92</sup> For example, during 1878 and 1879 Gurney, with Galton, inspected the buildings of Brighton High School and Dulwich High School. After which, they presented a memorandum about the construction and sanitary problems at the Dulwich school, submitted a signed report about its future extension, and recommended a particular architect for the necessary work. Then, in April 1880 Gurney and Galton inspected and reported on the buildings at Croydon High School.<sup>93</sup>

In addition, Gurney was closely involved in the siting of the new Wimbledon High School. The school opened in 1880 near to where she had lived until the year before, thus she was familiar with the area, with the local committee, and 'took a keen interest in working for the school before it was opened'. The committee included 'E. Rawlings', probably Gurney's cousin, as well as Marianne Gaskell Holland, the daughter of the writer Elizabeth Gaskell.<sup>94</sup> In November 1879 and January 1880 Gurney reported on premises she had seen that might be suitable. By June 1880 she

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<sup>91</sup> GDS6/5/1/3 (14<sup>th</sup> Dec. - 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1910) 1 - 329

<sup>92</sup> GDS6/5/1/1, (16<sup>th</sup> July 1879), (24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1880), (11<sup>th</sup> April 1883)

<sup>93</sup> GDS3/3/5 (26<sup>th</sup> March 1879) 31, (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1879) 114; GDS6/5/1/1 (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1878) 59 - 60, (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1879) 101, (7<sup>th</sup> April 1880) 102

<sup>94</sup> Hastings, M. (1931), *Wimbledon*, WHS archive (1993); GDS12/25/1 Papers concerning the opening of Wimbledon High School; Uglow, J. 'E. Gaskell', *ODNB*

had proposed that a particular building was leased and by July she had arranged the transfer of Edith Hastings, the headmistress of the GSC's Nottingham High School, to the new school.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Gurney and Hastings had previously 'met to look for suitable premises'. Gurney argued that the school should not be 'down the hill' in Wimbledon Town, but nearer to Wimbledon Village and Common.<sup>96</sup> Her concern for the GSC schools' first grade status was reflected in that statement, just as her moulding of GSC space was reflected in the sponsored mobility of Hastings.

Lastly, her growing exercise of power was illustrated by the January 1884 'sketch plans by Miss Gurney [containing]...various alterations' to an architect's plans for the improvement of Maida Vale High School. These sketches were presented to the committee and it was resolved that the architect be asked 'to send amended plans...on the lines of the latter [alterations]'.<sup>97</sup>

Gurney held on to her position in the Sites and Buildings Committee and until the outbreak of the Great War she travelled, on its behalf, to the Trust's schools.<sup>98</sup> The new Victorian and Edwardian methods of transport and communication, such as the steam-train, made it easier for her to exercise the centralised control Kay-Shuttleworth recommended in 1874. After 1892 these visits were mostly done alone, only occasionally did the chairmen of this committee and the Council accompany her.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, back at the London head office she continued in the new century to alter

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<sup>95</sup> GDS6/5/1/1 (19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1879), (21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1880); GDS3/3/6 (16<sup>th</sup> June 1880), (21<sup>st</sup> July, 1880) 72

<sup>96</sup> Hastings, *Wimbledon*

<sup>97</sup> GDS6/5/1/1 (30<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1884) 249

<sup>98</sup> The value to Gurney's career of the new Victorian railways is made plain in map 5.1 at the end of chapter 5

<sup>99</sup> GDS 6/5/1/2 (15<sup>th</sup> June 1892), (30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1892) (10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1894); GDS6/5/1/3 (14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1898), (20<sup>th</sup> June 1900), (21<sup>st</sup> June 1905), (15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1905); GDS6/5/1/4 (7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1910), (18<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1911), (19<sup>th</sup> July 1911), (8<sup>th</sup> July 1914); GDS6/4/6 (11<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1911); GDS3/3/24 (26<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1898) 108, (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1898) 120; GDS3/3/32 (27<sup>th</sup> June 1906) 154; GDS3/3/40 (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1914) 92

and sanction plans.<sup>100</sup> Although, unlike in the other four, Gurney never held the temporary or permanent chair in this key committee, she remained an important member of it until her death in 1917.

vi

### Teachers

In October 1879 Gurney became a member of the fourth body to develop into a leading part of the Trust's organisation during her career: the new Teachers Committee. It took on responsibility for all issues connected to the assistant mistresses' appointments, dismissals, promotions, demotions, and salaries based on Gurney's classification scheme. The small sub-committee, established in the autumn of 1878, in which she had lately dealt with those issues was simultaneously dissolved.<sup>101</sup> Five others also became members, including Roundell, Stanley, and Stone, who became its first chairman, but not Grey and Shirreff. Gurney eventually took over its chairmanship in May 1913 when she stepped down from the post of Education Committee chairman. She remained a member of the Teachers Committee until her death, although Roundell cut back his attendance considerably from 1892 and Stanley left it in 1894, as did Stone in 1896. In addition, from October 1879 to December 1882 Gurney was absent from only one of its 63 meetings and only Stone nearly equalled her 98% attendance rate with a presence of 94%. Moreover, across all of the 121 meetings until December 1885 she was absent on only six occasions, with again no other member reaching near to this rate except Stone who was absent on only five occasions. This committee tended to meet twice a month on Wednesday afternoon, either before or after the Education Committee met. By 1879 patterns in timing as well as procedure were

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<sup>100</sup> GDS6/5/1/3 (13<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1901) 97, (21<sup>st</sup> June 1905), (15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1905); GDS6/5/1/4 (19<sup>th</sup> July 1911) 36, (10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1915)

<sup>101</sup> GDS3/3/5 (30<sup>th</sup> July 1879) 92

developing across Gurney's bureaucratic work and this enhanced her training in educational governance.<sup>102</sup>

Another key example of this growth in routines occurred in the winter of 1879. Gurney, as a member of the Teachers Committee, took on responsibility for another annual task. Again this lasted until the 1910s and it resembled her collation of the headmistresses' detailed February reports on their schools, begun in the spring of 1879 as a member of the Education Committee. Every November those women were further asked for a confidential report on each of their teachers. Combining these reports with her classification scheme, drawn up in 1876 and 1877, Gurney then led the decision-making over staff salaries, including those of the headmistresses, for the coming year. This process was challenging for all concerned especially when, as occurred in 1881, some reports were deemed inadequate.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, this work was crucial to the centralised control of the high schools' viability. It also provided Gurney with a complete snapshot of all the teachers once a year and supplemented her supervision of changes in personnel and their responsibilities made during the terms. Between 1879 and 1885 only Gurney, Stone, and one or two other members of the Teachers Committee were present in the 'special' November and December meetings held to finalise the classification and salary decisions. In 1885 only Gurney and Stone met to carry out this fundamental and increasingly arduous work. Between 1879 and 1885 the number of staff who became the subject of reports and classification went in steady stages from 145 to 299 as the number of schools rose from 17 to 30.<sup>104</sup> The doubling of this annual task's workload over only six years and Gurney's close working

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<sup>102</sup> GDS6/7/1 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1879 - 21<sup>st</sup> July 1886) 1 - 302

<sup>103</sup> GDS6/7/1 (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1881) 87

<sup>104</sup> GDS6/7/1 (10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1879), (30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1880), (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1881), (13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1882), (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1883), (12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1884), (11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1885)



relationship with the chairman of the Council in this committee, as in other committees, provides further evidence of her importance to the Company by the mid-1880s. Indeed, Stone's reliance on her even meant that she 'sanctioned' the ongoing appointments of assistant mistresses 'for' him in July 1884.<sup>105</sup>

Another indication of Gurney's growing strength as a policy-maker and administrator was her assessment from 1881 of the cost per pupil of the assistant mistresses in each school. From that date Gurney compared the information she held on the staff provided by the November reports, the classifications, and the fixing of salaries with the information on pupil numbers provided by the February reports and the updates requested every term from the schools on personnel changes. Redundancies were then ordered when it was felt a school was over-spending on its teachers. For instance, in 1882 the schools in Notting Hill, Norwich and Bath received such orders.<sup>106</sup> Gurney used this financial surveillance for the rest of her career within the Trust in order to assist the high schools' survival.

vii

#### Examinations and Studies

In October 1884 Gurney became a member of the fifth committee to develop for her into a long-standing component of the Trust's structure: the new Examinations Committee. It did not meet on a regular basis and in 1897 it became known instead as the Examinations and Studies Committee. It only convened when 'the state of business shall require' it to do so. Until 1916 the number of its meetings in a year varied from eight to none at all and they were not necessarily on the same days as the other committees came together. However, when they occurred Gurney attended them far

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<sup>105</sup> GDS 6/7/1 (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1884) 214

<sup>106</sup> GDS6/7/1 (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1881), (15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1882)

more than the only other founder who belonged to it: this was Roundell and he left it in 1891. Its chairman, Stone, was the sole member to nearly equal her attendance between 1884 and 1896, when he also left it. Moreover, Gurney was its only woman member until 1886 and even after that year another female's presence was extremely rare. It was not until 1893 that a second woman became a regular member.<sup>107</sup> Gurney did not become Stone's immediate successor, possibly because she preferred to wait for the greater influence she would acquire as permanent chairman of the Education Committee from 1897 to 1913. Nevertheless, she temporarily took on the chairmanship of this irregular committee on six occasions between 1890 and 1909 and finally in 1911 she did become its permanent chairman. She worked as such until 1916 and remained a member of this body until her death.<sup>108</sup>

It can be argued that Gurney's apprenticeship as a leader of the GST was nearly over by the time she joined this committee. In 1884 she was an experienced councillor, guiding the affairs of the high schools through other committees which had already become the bedrock of the Company's business. Nevertheless, her presence on this fifth key body meant she did not forfeit the control she had developed within the Education Committee over the organisation's examination system. During and after the 1880s Gurney maintained command over all aspects of the internal examinations sat by pupils and also, as far as possible, over the external examinations they sat. For instance, each year she chose the external papers and using circulars informed the headmistresses of her choices, although at times she did consider their requests.<sup>109</sup> She also entered into disputes with 'Mr Gross' of the Oxford and Cambridge Schools

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<sup>107</sup> GDS6/6/1 (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1884 - 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1921) 1 - 302 and (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1884) 1

<sup>108</sup> GDS6/6/1 (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1890), (13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1892), (16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1898), (1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1899), (26<sup>th</sup> July 1899), (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1909), (24<sup>th</sup> May 1911), (17<sup>th</sup> May 1916)

<sup>109</sup> GDS6/6/1 (1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1887), (24<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1888), (30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1889), (11<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1890), (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1891) and for example: (2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1896), (16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1898), and (1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1899)

Examination Board, also known as the Joint Board, over the content of that board's papers.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, in October 1884 Gurney was asked, as before, to 'settle' the sections of external examiners' reports which were to go to the schools. This task then became another one of her annual routines until the 1910s. In addition, she began to make yearly comparisons of the schools' examination performances for the committees and the Council. This 'synopsis of the results prepared by Miss Gurney', as it was described in October 1898, was used to communicate with headmistresses if performances were considered poor.<sup>111</sup> Over time her censored summaries and confidential analyses grew more complicated and others joined her in this examination work but those tasks remained another example of why she was vital to the Trust's centralised control of its schools.

Overall, across the last decades of the nineteenth century Gurney was considerably more involved in the work of the five key committees of the Council than Grey and Shirreff or any of the other founding councillors of the Company.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, while Gurney was a member of all five, Shirreff was a member of only two and Grey of only one. Moreover, Gurney grew more powerful within them as the decades passed and therefore even more important to the schools' operation but the Shirreff sisters grew less so. Neither of them, unlike Gurney, became permanent chairman of three of those committees. Admittedly, at times Stone's weight of work seemed to equal Gurney's but it ended twenty years earlier than her employment for the GST. Furthermore, he was not an initiator of the innovatory scheme for girls' high schools as she was and, most importantly when considering the rationale of this thesis, he has not

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<sup>110</sup> GDS6/6/1 (13<sup>th</sup> May 1896), (14<sup>th</sup> July 1897)

<sup>111</sup> GDS6/6/1 (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1884) 2, (21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1885), (20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1886) and for example: (23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1888), (21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1891), (20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1893), (30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1895), (19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1898) 103

<sup>112</sup> For a comparative overview of Gurney's and other councillors' attendance rates at meetings of GST governing bodies see table 6.1 at the end of chapter 6

overshadowed Gurney in the historiography of female education, unlike Grey and Shirreff.

## 5

### Challenge

Apart from the arduous nature of her GSC work and the long wait for a permanent chairmanship, Gurney also had to deal with conflicts within the Company during the 1870s and 1880s. These challenges were part of her apprenticeship as an educational leader and they prepared her for more serious conflicts in the second half of her 45 years with the organisation, particularly those with the Board of Education after 1902 when the Company became a Trust. They also need recognition to help avoid an interpretation of Gurney's career as one of unhindered progress.

An early conflict involved finance. In April 1874 Gurney submitted a report to the Council recommending a policy about the non-payment of fees due to pupil absences and in January 1878, as a member of the Finance Committee, she prosecuted a legal case concerning outstanding fees which prompted a counter-claim of weak teaching.<sup>113</sup> Equally early in her GSC work, Gurney faced problems concerning staff. In January 1874 she investigated an allegation that Harriet Jones, the headmistress of Notting Hill and Bayswater High School, was acting without authorisation and bringing the Council into 'disrepute' by offering 'a salary of so small amount' to a potential assistant mistress. Jones was interviewed, although she was subsequently exonerated.<sup>114</sup> In addition, with Roundell and Baden-Powell, in May 1874 Gurney dealt with Mary Porter's complaint of 'insubordinate conduct' by one of her assistant

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<sup>113</sup> GDS3/3/1 (23<sup>rd</sup> April 1874) 364; GDS6/4/1 (1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1878) 33

<sup>114</sup> GDS3/3/1 (29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1874) 336 - 337

mistresses at Chelsea High School. The mistress was advised to leave.<sup>115</sup> Then from June to November 1875 Gurney, as a member of the Education Committee, had to counter accusations about the mismanagement of the third school opened in Croydon only the year before. Eventually the headmistress, Dorinda Neligan, was cleared of ‘partiality’ and ‘refusal’ to support her staff as well as of ‘false’ reporting to the Council. Gurney, unlike Grey, supported the conclusion in that committee’s printed report to the Council that the ‘interests of the Croydon School’ had been threatened by ‘inadequate’ evidence.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, in July 1879 Gurney was the arbiter of a dispute between the headmistress of Bath High School, ‘Miss Wood’, and one of her assistant mistresses. Wood’s decision to dismiss her was upheld but only after interviews had taken place with the mistress as well as Wood.<sup>117</sup>

The resolution of disputes between staff continued to occupy Gurney in the next decade. In March 1881 Gurney, with others, concluded that there had been ‘serious irregularities in the conduct’ of an examination at Dulwich High School, although the teachers were cleared of ‘dishonesty’.<sup>118</sup> While in February 1886 Gurney interviewed the headmistress, Rebecca Allen Olney, of South Hampstead High School and one of its assistant mistresses over the latter’s suspension. The conclusion which was reached, that the mistress should apply to teach in another Company school, tended to undermine Olney’s decision. This affair may have contributed to Olney’s resignation later in 1886 and that of Sarah Allen Olney, who was the headmistress of the

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<sup>115</sup> GDS3/3/2 (21<sup>st</sup> May 1874) 2

<sup>116</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 (25<sup>th</sup> June 1875), (26<sup>th</sup> July 1875), (21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1875), (24<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1875) 10 - 44

<sup>117</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (9<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1879) 141 - 156

<sup>118</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1881 and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1881) 230 - 232

Company's Blackheath High School, in the same year. The sisters went on to set up a rival school for girls in Hampstead.<sup>119</sup>

Challenges of a different sort also occupied Gurney from 1879 to 1885. In a Sites and Building Committee meeting in January 1879 Gurney questioned the financial probity of the Company's surveyor, 'Mr Henman', and proposed that he be replaced. Before a decision was reached an examination was made of his official expenditures and his personal expenses. In March her proposal was recommended to the Council. Also, an alternative procedure for dealing with tenders for new buildings was established in which they were examined by the committee or the Council. By May 1880 'Mr Tanner' was carrying out the annual surveys of the schools' buildings instead of Henman.<sup>120</sup> In comparison to this thorny matter, the on-going complaints by the headmistresses about the lack of heating in the schools may have seemed to Gurney an easy problem to overcome.<sup>121</sup> However, her recourse to the law in June 1885 over the standard of builders' work at Maida Vale High School may not have seemed so.<sup>122</sup>

Of further significance for Gurney's developing resilience, in 1874 a problematic relationship with Clapham shareholders began which reached a peak in 1877. In May she and Roundell had a conference with representatives of those shareholders and then drew up a report. Based on that report, the Council resolved that 'they cannot work a school over which they have not entire control'.<sup>123</sup> Eventually, despite the tension over the GSC's centralisation of power, a middle school was established in 1875. However,

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<sup>119</sup> GDS3/3/12 (3<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1886) 21; Adams T. 'S. Allen Olney', *ODNB*

<sup>120</sup> GDS6/5/1/1 (21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1879), (5<sup>th</sup> March 1879) 73 - 74, (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1879) 101, (12<sup>th</sup> May 1880)

<sup>121</sup> GDS6/5/1/1 (26<sup>th</sup> May 1880), (27<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1880) 147, (11<sup>th</sup> May 1881), (20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1886) 329

<sup>122</sup> GDS6/5/1/1 (3<sup>rd</sup> June 1885) 310

<sup>123</sup> GDS3/3/2 (21<sup>st</sup> May 1874) 3

in December 1876 this tension resurfaced. Gurney had felt obliged to propose the school's temporary closure because of sanitary and structural problems. Indeed, parents had complained of 'injury to the health of pupils', building inspectors had been sent in, and the Company's solicitors had been consulted. Due to the 'gravity' of the situation, in January 1877 Gurney persisted with her proposal and argued that a high school open instead in another Clapham building. Despite her preferences, the middle school survived the crisis and the high school did not open until 1882.<sup>124</sup>

However, more problematic to Gurney than these outcomes was the related attempt by the Clapham shareholders to oust her from the Council during the Company's February 1877 AGM and replace her with their candidate. They also sought to put onto the Council a representative from each of the local committees belonging to the twelve high schools which existed by then. Circulars were sent out to the nation-wide investors by both the Council and the Clapham challengers asking for support through proxy voting. Roundell called a special meeting of the Council about this 'question of principle of the deepest importance'. Indeed, 670 were present by proxy at the AGM, in comparison to the maximum number of 38 present in total at any of the previous eight AGMs.<sup>125</sup> In the end Gurney survived this attempted coup, as did the centralised control exercised by her and the rest of the Council. Local representation did not become a feature of its membership. Nevertheless, this event may have demonstrated to Gurney how it was possible in her public work to make a web of opponents as well as a web of supporters and that her developing power needed constant defending. 1877 was the year she had the opportunity to learn much from her training in middle-level leadership at the GSC.

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<sup>124</sup> GDS3/3/2 (13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1876) 273, (4<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1877) 276; GDS6/2/2 (6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1876) 81

<sup>125</sup> GDS3/3/2 (27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1877) 297 - 298; GDS4/1/1 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1872 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug. 1876)

### Historiographical context

Lastly, it is important to note that this and the previous chapters' understanding of Gurney's career confirm the value to educational historiography of feminist and networking concepts. They demonstrate that the conceptual thinking of both the revisionist and the post-revisionist historians of education does help to deepen historical analysis. However, they also indicate that some ideas are more valuable than others and that some historiographical views, reached when assisted by the ideas, can need further development.

Fuchs recommended the use of two concepts in a study of past education. The first was that non-hierarchical networked relationships provide the social capital of access. The second was that increased professionalism reduces a reliance on networking.<sup>126</sup> Both these ideas are used to help understand Gurney's career in chapters three and four as well as in later chapters five, six, and seven. Chapter three shows that she had networked access to the most powerful in the land: government ministers and MPs, academics and lawyers, as well the upper class. Chapter four illustrates that as she became more skilled in the policy-making and administration of the GST she resorted to greater use of hierarchical and bureaucratic governance to exercise control. For example, as chairman of the Education Committee from 1897 she wrote more standardised and lengthier assessments of the high schools' hundreds of staff and thousands of examination results than before. There was also a multiplication of more formalised directives to the headmistresses, although the use of personal contacts and personal knowledge did survive within her governance style. Furthermore, Fuchs

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<sup>126</sup> Fuchs, 'Networks', 187, 191 - 192



advocated the measurement of networks, rather than just the description of them. In chapters three and four, as in succeeding ones, the density and intensity of Gurney's network and networking opportunities are measured through analysis of the shared membership of educational bodies by those in her circle.<sup>127</sup>

Alternatively, Burstyn recognised that networking assists the informal training of a volunteer, an idea taken from the theory of learning.<sup>128</sup> This chapter's analysis of Gurney's involvement in networked voluntary groupings, such as the teaching force of her local Sunday-school, the board of school governors established by the BFSS in Wandsworth, and the councils and committees of the WEU and the GSC, supports that idea. Moreover, this and later chapters' demonstration of Gurney's tendency to use sponsored mobility to further the professional careers of the GST headmistresses and assistant mistresses provides an example of the networking concept Pedersen saw as the dominant method behind promotion within English reformed girls' schools of the late nineteenth century.<sup>129</sup>

The theory that networks are spatial as well as relational was used by Goodman, Martin, Fitzgerald, Smyth and other feminist historians.<sup>130</sup> These historians refined this concept to include the idea that within a network's space women of the past were able to create gender, professional, and other types of identity which had fluid boundaries. They also argued that chosen identities of the past should not be distorted by imposing on them the image of isolated worthy women and they proposed that

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<sup>127</sup> Fuchs, 'Networks', 43, 2, 185 - 197, 191; for further measurement of the density and intensity of Gurney's network and networking opportunities, analysed in chapters three to seven, see table 4.1 and figure 4.1 at the end of this chapter

<sup>128</sup> Burstyn, 'Sources of influence', 69 - 73

<sup>129</sup> Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 226, 436, footnote 77

<sup>130</sup> Milsom, *Inter-war headmistresses*; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', 97, 114, footnote 6; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*, 12, 20

transnational networks increased the pace at which women's authority developed.<sup>131</sup> Chapters three and four, with those that succeed them, illustrate that Gurney's career did involve the use of a network that was both spatial and relational. Moreover, it assisted her to constantly change her performance as an educationalist. In addition, the chapters illustrate that she chose to operate within a transnational network, rather than in heroic isolation, and that this choice did increase her authority.

Another refinement of the spatial concept developed by Goodman et al was the notion that a network is a perilous as well as a secure borderland between private and public space. This networked borderland was also identified as a feminine public sphere.<sup>132</sup> These ideas challenged Delamont's view that Victorians operated rigid separate spheres for men and women and, therefore, that women in the past faced the double conformity snare which bound them to be feminine in the home but masculine within academic organisations.<sup>133</sup> Chapters three and four, with the later ones, support that refinement. They show that Gurney used the borderland characteristics of her spatial network to make headway in an educational feminine public sphere. She too blurred the boundaries of her private and public spaces. She relied on her network to provide her with not only a safe and supported working environment but also one holding riskier opportunities, which could allow her to act out and develop her entrepreneurial, financial, and educator skills. Once again the nature of Gurney's career demonstrates the value of using theoretical concepts to assist historical analysis.

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<sup>131</sup> Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*, 3 - 11; Fitzgerald, 'Networks of influence', 32 - 35; Goodman and Milsom, 'Performing reforming', 97 - 109, 115 - 117, footnotes 8, 49; Whitehead 'Mary Gutteridge' 122; Raftery, 'Lives, networks and topographies', 180; Goodman ' "Their market values" '; Milsom, *Inter-war headmistresses*; Whitehead, 'Mary Gutteridge', 122, 132, 145, footnote 7

<sup>132</sup> Goodman, 'Women school board members', 66; Martin, 'Women not wanted', 79; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*, 23; Fitzgerald, 'Networks of influence', 24 - 25; Raftery, 'Lives, networks and topographies', 182 - 187 footnote 15; Smitley, *The feminine public sphere*

<sup>133</sup> Delamont, 'The contradictions in ladies' education', 140

The examination of Gurney's working practice also tends to support the theory put forward by Jonathan Davies and Anne Mette Kjaer that hierarchical governance and networked governance sustain each other. Davies argued that 'characterising institutions as 'hierarchies' or 'networks' is misleading'.<sup>134</sup> Chapter four as well as chapter six indicates that within the GST Gurney accepted a hierarchy of power which, in principle, was subject to scrutiny. In addition they indicate that Gurney reduced this scrutiny through the use of networking. The newness, uncertain future, and centralised nature of the organisation probably assisted her approach. With some in her network she came to dominate sub-committees, key committees, and the Council of the Trust. Therefore, decisions were not particularly subject to a slow and critical gaze by groupings independent of each other. Also, the share-holders, local committees, and grant-giving government bodies were kept by Gurney and the other dominant councillors at as much of a distance from information and the making of decisions as possible. Her survival on the Council in 1877 demonstrated this, as did the prevention of potentially damaging scandals in other years which were made possible by the incompetence of headmistresses and the suspected fraud of the Company's surveyor. Gurney's combination of hierarchical governance and networked governance sustained the GST during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Davies' and Kjaer's theory is partially confirmed by that particular combination in Gurney's career.

In contrast, chapters four and six demonstrate that not every theory used by feminist historians to enhance their analysis is fully supported by Gurney's career. The idea that within mixed-sex meetings women tend to be over-shadowed by men was

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<sup>134</sup> Kjaer, A. (2004) *Governance*, Cambridge: Polity Press; Davies, J. (2011) *Challenging governance theory: from networks to hegemony*, Bristol: Policy Press, 153

used by Goodman as an indicator of what may have happened to Gurney when she appeared as the representative of the GSC before the Bryce Commission.<sup>135</sup> While Gurney may have been side-lined during that 1894 interview, she did not appear to have been so when she attended, and especially when she chaired, GST meetings. Possibly this was because those meetings occurred within what feminist theory has identified as her networked borderland or feminine public sphere. As Bryant and Goodman warned, not all theories adequately reflect the past.<sup>136</sup> Context and new evidence can demonstrate their weakness as tools for understanding.

Again in contrast, chapters four and six demonstrate that Gurney's career does not fully reflect another feminist concept. Harrop, Hunt, and Goodman applied to nineteenth-century female educationalists the notion that female authority is reduced as more formal male-orientated procedures are adopted and that this regression can be halted through women's professional development.<sup>137</sup> These chapters indicate that, in the main, Gurney's exercise of authority did not follow this pattern. From the 1860s she had the opportunity to develop her expertise from the working practices of male colleagues experienced in business, law, and education. In addition, within Gurney's network there were almost as many men as there were women who had the greatest number of professional connections with her. Therefore, when their respective total density is considered, intense networking was as likely to happen with the men as it was with the women in her network.<sup>138</sup> This likelihood was probably due to the usefulness of the men's established professional skills and contacts. Also, when faced

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<sup>135</sup> Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction', 294 - 295

<sup>136</sup> Goodman, 'Troubling histories' 157 - 158; Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 83 - 84

<sup>137</sup> Hunt, 'Divided aims', 8 - 12, 196, footnotes 20, 41; Goodman, 'Women governors' 30 - 31; Goodman, 'Women school board members', 73; Goodman and Harrop, '“The peculiar preserve”' 141 - 143; Betts, 'Parliamentary women' 170; Goodman, 'Constructing contradictions'

<sup>138</sup> See table 4.1 and fig. 4.1 at the end of this chapter

with the growth of bureaucracy, her professionalism tended to keep pace with change. For example, she became chairman of three of the GST's key committees in the 1890s and 1910s, not in the 1870s and 1880s when the Trust was less bureaucratic. There was no regression in her power during her 45 years with that organisation. Indeed, she developed some of the bureaucracy which threatened its headmistresses' power. Gurney was a forceful innovator who used bureaucratisation as an opportunity to extend her authority. This interpretation of her work is another example of why theories about women need to be treated carefully, a cautionary approach which Davies as well as Power Cobbe recommended and which Bryant and Goodman echoed.<sup>139</sup>

On a less controversial note, concepts which delineated past feminist reformers were formulated by Delamont and Martin.<sup>140</sup> The work and words of Gurney analysed in chapter four and later chapters indicate that the best fit for her are the concepts of a liberal femocrat of the uncompromising sort. She sought equality with men as well as evolutionary reform, unlike the conservative feminists known as separatists who just sought reform and unlike the radical feminists who sought the restructuring of society. Lastly, those chapters show that Gurney's career confirms the theory that class concerns can dominate feminist concerns. Bryant, Dyhouse, and Pedersen agreed that, while feminism was an important part of the motivation of the late nineteenth-century educational reformers, the prime motivation of the majority of them was the protection and enhancement of their middle-class status.<sup>141</sup> Gurney's priority was made plain in

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<sup>139</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 23, 83 - 84; Goodman, 'Troubling histories' 157 - 158

<sup>140</sup> Delamont, 'The contradictions', 154; Martin, '“Women not wanted”', 83 - 84

<sup>141</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 28 - 29, 41, 85; Dyhouse, *Girls growing up*, 57, 141- 143; Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 11, 27 - 33

her 1872 pamphlet which she headed with the question, *Are we to have education for our middle-class girls?*

Overall, it is clear that conceptual thinking aids the study of Gurney's work and that her career confirms some of that thinking. It is also clear that not all theories apply equally to her career and some are of less use in understanding it. Indeed, an understanding of her work suggests that some historiographical conclusions made with the help of those theories need a degree of revision. This thesis not only challenges historians' failure to appreciate the importance of Gurney to female education, it also challenges previous historiographical arguments that past female educationalists' lost authority when they encountered male leadership and engaged with male-orientated bureaucracy.

#### Conclusion

From a historical perspective, rather than a historiographical one, this chapter demonstrates that Gurney began the 1860s with little personal experience of how to support the provision of female education, especially of the precarious academic sort. Nevertheless, to spur her on she had a framework of encouragement from those within her network and an atmosphere of frustration and fear created by many outside of it. Therefore, by the 1890s she had undergone a slow and challenging public training, particularly within the GSC, on how to create, sustain, and lead female education. In the process she had developed an identity and performed an agency across her networked and feminised public space. She was hindered by the gendered structures of English society but she was helped by its class structures. This mid-Victorian apprenticeship, which forged and stretched her skills, facilitated her later career.

Also, and more importantly, Gurney's work for the GSC from the 1870s to the 1890s was able to bridge some of the gap in the provision of female secondary education in England, a gap the government was reluctant to fill at that time. Thus, the Company's 38 schools, established by 1902 across the nation but under a centralised control and with such consequent uniformities that they can almost be seen as 38 branches of one school, became a model to the Board of Education after 1899 of what could be created by the state. Indeed, it can be argued that in those decades Gurney and others in the Company, despite their own need to learn how to run a system of girls' secondary schools from London, acted as precursors and exemplars to the civil servants who organised the state system of secondary education after 1902. Therefore, the rather shadowy educational space Gurney inhabited was of importance not only to girls during the nineteenth century but also to those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Table 4.1: *Further measurement of Gurney's network and networking opportunities*

*Qualifications:*

The further measurement below is not definitive. Only the professional connections (286) identified and analysed within the text of the thesis are used. It is hard to believe that during her career Gurney did not have many more connections and it is possible she was engaged in more enterprises than those considered (54). Also, the illustrated peak of her network's membership (107) would have risen and fallen at different points across her career. This measurement deals more simply with Gurney's career as a whole based on the primary evidence which was investigated.

In addition, the quantity of Gurney's professional connections did not necessarily reflect the quality of any consequent networking opportunities, as greater value does not always lie in a greater number. Nevertheless, the density of Gurney's network and intensity of her networking opportunities, based on social, economic, and cultural capital developed across time, are again indicated by this further measurement. Of course, the examples and analysis of the shared educational occupations, projects, and policies of her circle within the text are the greatest indication of the density and intensity of her network and networking opportunities.

*Guide and observations:*

In the further measurement below, the identified members of Gurney's network are classified by their number of professional connections (from 12 to 1) with her. The more dense areas of her network contained those members (95 or 89%) with whom she had between five and one connections. All the connections provided her with networking opportunities, nevertheless, those members (12 or 11%) who had between twelve and six professional connections with Gurney provided her with more intense networking opportunities.



Out of the males (42 or 39%) and females (65 or 61%) identified as members, there were similar numbers of men (5 or 5%) and women (7 or 7%) who had between twelve and six connections with Gurney. Also men and women provided a similar proportion of their total number (107) within those levels of connection (12% and 11%). It seems that Gurney's more intense networking was as likely to happen with the males as with the females in her network.

Nevertheless, more women (52 or 49%) than men (30 or 28%) formed the more dense part of her network. Of course, it is recognised that when members (43 or 40%) were connected to Gurney through only a single enterprise they were not acting as the most useful of networking conduits. They did not enhance her access to others in different enterprises, although they had the opportunity to enhance her access to others in the same enterprise.

With regards to the identified connections within the enterprises which offered Gurney opportunities for networking, the GST provided the most connections (53) by a considerable margin of difference. In comparison, the WEU (19), GC (18), the FS (14), the LSEUT (13), and the VL (10) were next as steady providers of opportunities, as was the Suffrage campaign (15). The House of Commons (7), the SEC (6), the NAPSS (6), and the Board of Education (5) were less useful but nevertheless provided such opportunities, as did CLC (7), the BFSS (5) and the PHC (3). These fourteen enterprises provided nearly two thirds of the identified connections (181 or 63%) through which Gurney could network, in comparison to the remaining forty enterprises' provision (105 or 37%). It is not surprising that the GST was the most fruitful source of networking for her as she spent the longest period of her career working for it (45 years) and it offered her the greatest exercise of power.

In the further measurement below, the symbol ~ indicates family members (12 or 11%) who during their working lives shared professional connections (33 or 12%) with Gurney through which her networking could take place. It is clear that these family members, while they may have exercised an important introductory role in Gurney's networking, did not during the rest of her career enhance its density and intensity as much as those in her network who were not family members.

The + indicates that Gurney could network with members (32 or 30%) within enterprises (5 or 9%) across more than one constituent part, such as governing bodies, committees, and schools. This capacity would have offered her the opportunity to tighten the intensity of her networking.

The \* indicates that indirect connections (71 or 25%) were made with members. Gurney is not shown in the text to have engaged in the enterprises these members worked for but she could network with others who are shown to have engaged with them in those enterprises. This allowed her to extend the density of her networking.

The # indicates that some of her network's members (31 or 29%) were engaged in enterprises at the same time as Gurney was engaged in them and also at a different time, this increased the period in which they could uphold the density and intensity of her networking.

The ^ indicates that Gurney was not simultaneously engaged with these members (7 or 7%) in an enterprise but was engaged at a different time. While their engagement may have upheld the density and intensity of her networking, it was on a smaller scale to that upheld by those also engaged at the same time.

*The further measurement (the keys to the abbreviations are at the front of the thesis):*

12 professional connections and networking opportunities

Frances Buss: WEU, FS+, TTRS, CLC, CGX, GLT, SUFF, WWC, KS\*, NLCS\*,  
SIC\*, CP\*

11 connections and opportunities

Joshua Girling Fitch: NAPSS, LEA, CLC, LSEUT, PHC, GC, WUV, NSEA, SIC\*,  
ESC\*, *ESSAYS*

10

Millicent Garrett Fawcett: LEA, LSEUT, VL, LUV, WUV, CGX, GLT, WWC,  
SUFF#, WMD\*

James Bryce: MP\* SIC\*, SEC, GC#, WUV, WEU, GST, NSEA, RUVTA\*, *ESSAYS*

9

Maria Shirreff Grey: WEU, GSC+, LSEUT, FS+, TTRS, LDKC, WUV, SUFF, SA\*

8

Emily Shirreff: WEU, GSC+, FS+, TTRS, GC, LUV, SUFF, SA\*

7

Joseph Payne: NAPSS, WEU, GSC+, FS+, *NOTES*^, CP\*, SIC\*

Michael Sadler: LSEUT, SEC, VL, GST, NSEA, GLT#, BED\*

Emily Davies: NAPSS, GC+#, SUFF, WMD\*, SIC\*, KS\*, GST

6

George Bartley: WEU, GSC+, LSEUT, PHC+, *JWEU\**, MP\*

Jane Chessar: WEU, FS, CLC, LSEUT, TTRS#, CP\*

~Amelia Gurney: BFSS, GST#, VL, SUFF, PCA, FS^

5

~Russell Gurney: NAPSS#, GC^, WMD\*, MP\*, JC\*

George Lyttelton: WEU, CLC, SIC\*, ESC\*, SA\*

4

Henrietta Stanley: WEU, GSC+, GC^, LSEUT

Dorothy Beale: CLC, SUFF, KS\*, SIC\*,

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson: LUV, SUFF, WMED\*, KS\*

Charles Roundell: GSC+, MP\*, JC\* RUVTA\*

Henry Austin Bruce (Lord Aberdare): WEU, GSC, LSEUT, WMDW

Douglas Galton: WEU, GSC+, LSEUT, PHC+, RDS

Alfred Barry: WEU, LSEUT, CLC, LDKC#

James Kay-Shuttleworth: WEU, GSC, UCLE\*, EDD\*

Mary Porter: GSC, FS, SIC\*, KS\*

Elizabeth Adelaide Manning: GC#, FS+#, LASM\* KS\*

Lilian Faithfull: GSC, CLC^, LDKC #, VL

3

~'Mrs Rawlings': BFSS, GST, VL

Lucy Cavendish: SEC, GSC+, NSEA

Dorinda Neligan: GSC, FS, SUFF

Helen Taylor: WEU, LSB\*, KS \*

~Emelia Batten Gurney: GC, WMD\*,  
KS\*

Sophia Jex-Blake: SUFF, WMD\*,  
KS\*

~Emma Gurney Salter: GSC, GC,  
BFSS^

Emma Wilks Fitch: KS\*, SPEW\*,  
LCWW\*

~Louisa Mary Gurney: GSC, GC,  
NLCS\*

Florence Gadesden: GST#, GC+,  
*ESSAYS*

2

Edith Hastings: GST+#, LSEUT+

Katherine Jex-Blake: GST#, GC+#

Louisa Brough: WEU, TTRS#

Harriet Morant Jones: GSC, FS

Edith Creak: GSC, SUFF

William Stone: GSC+, SEC

Caroline Digby: GST+#, GC

Annie Ridley: WEU, *FMB*

~Joseph Gurney: BFSS#, PR\*

William Ballantyne Hodgson:

~William Gurney: FS, SS

NAPSS#, CP\*

Maurice Llewelyn Davies:

GST#, GC#

Sir Henry Craik: GST, MP\*

~Edward Rawlings: BFSS, GSC

~Winifred Gurney-Smith: GSC, GC

Philippa Garrett Fawcett: SUFF, LCC

Henrietta Baden-Powell: WEU, GSC

Princess Louise: WEU, GST

William Shaen: GC#, GSC

John Farmer: GSC, *FMB*

Anthony Mundella: RDS, EDD\*

Marion Withiel: GST, BED

Caroline Solly Manning: KS\* GC^

Maud Lawrence: BED, VL

Jessie Boucherett: KS\*, SPEW\*

Elizabeth Woodhouse: GST+#, VL

Susan Wood: GSC, SUFF

Sophie Bryant: SEC, NL

Wyndham Dunstan: GSC+, VL

1

Eleanor Margaret Allen: GC#

William Bousfield: GST+

Rose Kingsley: GSC

Emily Elizabeth Constance Jones: GC

John Northcote: GST+

Caroline Garrison Bishop: FS#

William Barber: GSC+

Anne Jemima Clough: SUFF

H. Weston Eve: GSC+

~Ellen Mary Gurney: *LETTERS\**

Maud Grenfell: GST+

Frances Power Cobbe: KS\*

Reta Oldham: GST#

Sarah Burstall: NLCS\*

Laurie Magnus: GST#

Bessie Rayner Parkes Belloc: LPC\*

Halford Mackinder: VL

Robert Morant: BED\*

Frederick Cavendish: WEU

'Mr Bruce': BED\*

George Goschen: LSEUT

Alice Moore Bruce: GST+

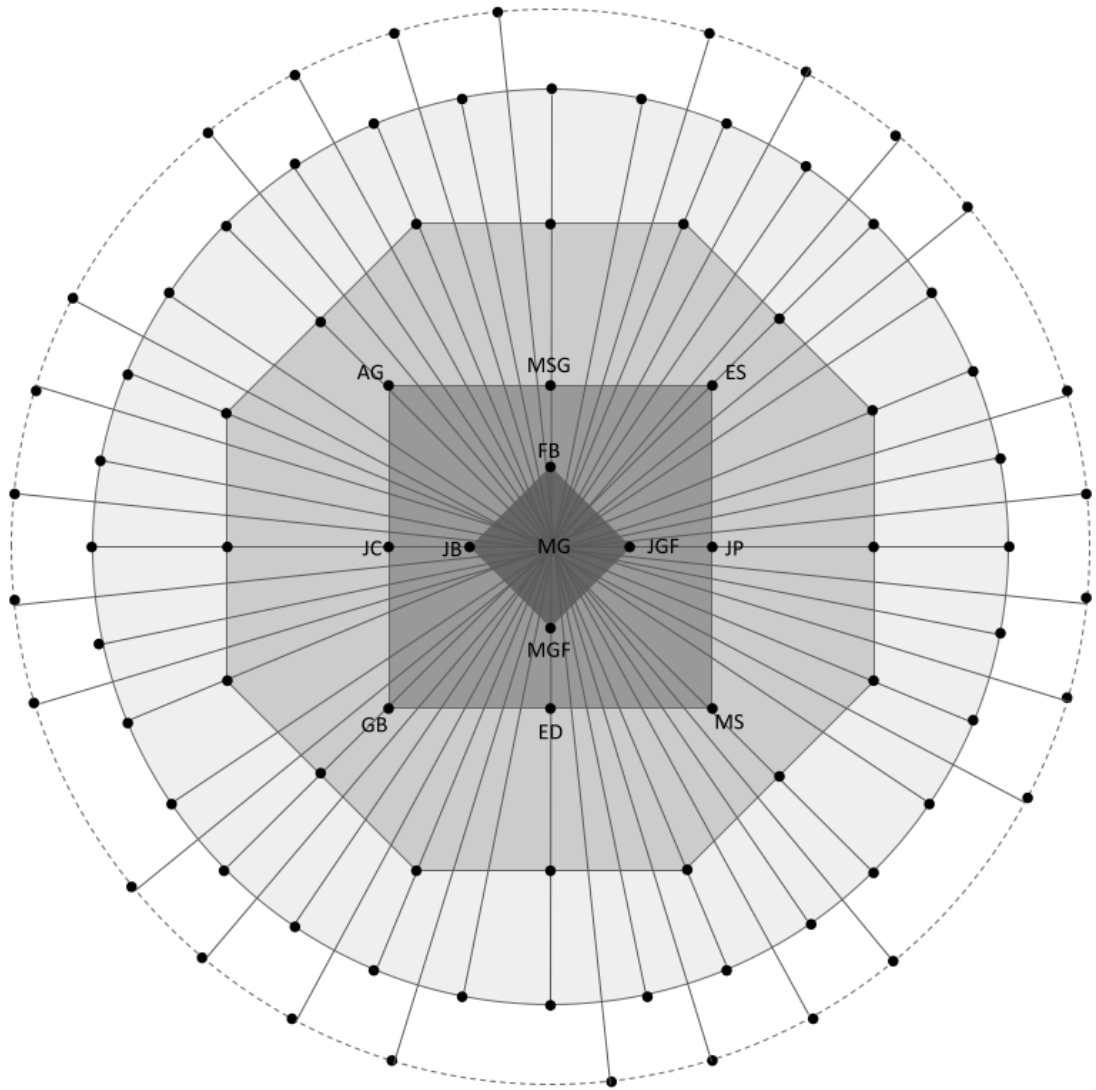
Beata Doreck: FS

Frances Martin: LCWW\*

Matthew Arnold: SIC*	Robert Lowe: MP*
John Henry Gurney: MP*	(Ann?) Escott: GST
Elizabeth Blackwell: WMD*	William Forster: MP*
Marianne Gaskell Holland: GSC	John Llewelyn Davies: LSEUT
~Marie Gurney: FS	Benjamin Jowett: BC*
Ethel Gavin: GST+#	Eleanor Sidgwick: SEC
Rosalind Haig Brown: GSC#	Isabel Rhys: GST+#
Mabel Lewis: GSC#	(George?) Gross: JB
Princess Helena: PHC	Dr (?) Garnett: LC
Joseph Savory: CLC	

Figure 4.1 also indicates, using a different format to prose, the areas of her network which had more or less density and the areas which had more or less intensity with regard to networking opportunities. In other words, which were more or less crowded and which had more or less opportunities based on social, economic, and cultural capital developed across time. The more dense areas of her network contained those members with whom she had between five and one professional connections, while the more intense areas of networking opportunities contained those members with whom she had between six and twelve professional connections. Of course, networking did not always follow on from the opportunities or achieve successful outcomes when it occurred.

Fig. 4.1: Further measurement of Gurney's network and networking opportunities using a web format



Key to fig. 4.1:

Number of network members/number of professional connections with Gurney/relative density of Gurney's network/relative intensity of Gurney's networking opportunities (only members with whom Gurney had the greatest intensity of opportunities are identified by their initials)

- ◇ = 4 in total/10 - 12 each/least dense area/most intense area
- □ = 8 in total/6 - 9 each/less dense area/more intense area
- ○ + inner ○ = 48 shown (out of 52 in total)/2 - 5 each/more dense area/less intense area
- Outer ○ = 42 shown (out of 43 in total)/1 each/most dense area/least intense area





## Chapter five: Further work in London and abroad

### Introduction

In the final quarter of the nineteenth century Gurney did not limit herself to working for the BFSS, the WEU, and the GSC. She also accepted a variety of other educational responsibilities. Without an understanding of the work she conducted elsewhere there cannot be a full appreciation of the extensive risk-taking Gurney embarked upon during her career, nor of the diversity of her educational impact. Therefore, this chapter begins in the 1870s as chapter four did, although it does go further into the 1900s and covers parts of her career which did not begin until the early twentieth century. However, the extant evidence of this other employment is not as revealing as that for the GSC. It is relatively brief and it covers a shorter period of time. Thus, tensions, conflicts, failures, and achievements are less obvious and less easy to chart. Nevertheless, enough detail was found to justify the view that Gurney developed demanding, powerful and, at times, effective roles within other organisations. It also justifies the view that the nature and effect of her networking opportunities altered further because of that additional employment.

Within the FS and GC Gurney laboured for the development of kindergartens for girls, female teacher-training, and a university college for women. As a member of the LSEUT she sought extramural university lecture courses for female audiences. By governing CLC and the PHC she supported girls' secondary schools and women's careers outside of the GSC's control. All the while, she pushed for the extension of national and transnational female education through her work for the VL and for a variety of lesser known organisations within England and abroad. Lastly, she continued as a published author and she maintained her allegiance to the wider

feminist movement of her era by campaigning for female suffrage from the 1870s to the 1910s.

During this extension of her career, her network's reach widened, its density thickened, and its intensity strengthened. For example, Gurney became publicly associated with the noted Froebelian, Beata Doreck, and with the MP and Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Goschen.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Fitch and Garrett Fawcett became more prominent members of Gurney's network as their engagement with each other grew across more educational ventures. Nevertheless, it can be argued that none of her additional occupational choices had as much impact as her choice to establish and sustain the GST. Despite this she pursued them, never fully knowing which would be the more beneficial to the education of women and girls as well as her own development.

1

## Expansion of responsibility

i

### The Froebel Society

The FS began in November 1874. It aimed to spread knowledge and practice of the Froebel system as well as certify and register kindergarten teachers in England.<sup>2</sup> Gurney, with fourteen others, was present at the founding meeting which took place in the London home of Beata Doreck. She lived at 63 Kensington Gardens Square in

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<sup>1</sup> Read, J. 'B. Doreck', *ODNB*; Spinner, T. 'G. Goschen' *ODNB*

<sup>2</sup> Lilley, I. (1963) *The dissemination of froebelian doctrines and methods in the English system of elementary education 1854 to 1918*, M.A. dissertation, University of London; Brehony, K. (1998) 'Even far distant Japan' is "showing an interest": the English Froebel's movement's turn to Sloyd', *History of Education*, 27, 3, 279 - 295; Read, 'Froebelian women'; Smart, G. (2006) *The training of Froebelian teachers in England, 1874 - 1914*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London Institute of Education; Read, J. (2011) *The Froebel Movement in Britain 1900 - 1939*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Roehampton

the area known as Bayswater. Some of the others were already part of Gurney's network, such as the Shirreff sisters, Mary Porter, and Elizabeth Manning.<sup>3</sup> In December 1874 Payne took part in the second meeting. By that time there were 40 members of the Society, including Buss, Harriet Jones and Dorinda Neligan.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the membership of the first three GSC headmistresses demonstrated the increasing intensity of Gurney's network. Moreover, the location of the Society's founding meeting indicated once again how that intensity was enhanced by the proximity of the networkers' homes and places of work. Payne lived close to Doreck at 4 Kildare Gardens in Bayswater, as did Joshua Fitch who lived at 13 Leinster Gardens in the same area. Russell and Emelia Gurney lived near, in Kensington Palace Gardens, so too did Manning and her step-mother, Charlotte, at 44 Phillimore Gardens, Kensington.

By July 1875 Gurney had become a member of the FS's Translation Committee. It consisted of only four members, two of whom were 'Mr and Mrs W. Gurney'.<sup>5</sup> They were likely to have been Gurney's elder brother, William, and his wife, Marie. If so, their involvement in the Society further demonstrated the intensity of her network. The purpose of the committee was to prepare an English guide for kindergarten teachers. In 1873 Gurney had her translations of German periodicals' accounts of conferences on the Froebel system of kindergartens published in the *JWEU*. Later, between 1906 and 1916, Gurney had her translations and reviews of German articles on classical subjects published in the *Antiquary* and in *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sutherland, 'E. A. Manning'

<sup>4</sup> NFF/1/1/1 (4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1874, 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1874)

<sup>5</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> July 1875) 103

<sup>6</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) 22 - 25; *Antiquary* (Oct. and Dec. 1906, Dec. 1907, June 1908, July 1912, Sept. 1913, May and Oct. 1914) London; *CLC Magazine* (spring 1906, autumn 1908, spring 1910, 1915, and 1916)

However it was the translation she produced as a member of this committee that more fully illustrated the transnational scope of her spatial and relational network, the depth of her educational authority, and the usefulness of her linguistic skills to female teacher training. In October 1875 it was reported to the Society that the first part of Gurney's translation of *Köhler's Praxis* 'was ready for publication'.<sup>7</sup> In 1877 this partial version of his guide to kindergarten teaching was published in English and in 1879 the second part of her version was also published.<sup>8</sup> Her prefaces to these two books indicated that 'Dr Koehler has kindly approved' their publication and that Gurney intended them to 'give Froebel's principles, as explained by Koehler, with only such illustrations as may be sufficient to suggest to the Teacher, the mode in which she should herself illustrate'. In other words, they were deliberate adaptations in order to allow 'an intelligent and thoughtful teacher either to illustrate further for herself, or to study the original...books'. Gurney appears to have favoured a teacher training technique that allowed for the cultivation of imagination as well as of initiative. She seems to have seen pedagogy as an art as well as a science, a view also held by Payne.<sup>9</sup>

From November 1875 Gurney was also involved in the training of women teachers through her membership of the FS's Committee for Examinations of Kindergarten Teachers. She shared this responsibility with ten others, including Payne, Shirreff, Grey, and Manning. At that committee's first two meetings Gurney and the others resolved that the Society would appoint an inspector to hold an examination at the end

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<sup>7</sup> NFF/1/1/1 (4<sup>th</sup> October 1875) 48

<sup>8</sup> Gurney, M. (1877) *Kindergarten practice, part 1*, London: A. Myers; Gurney, M. (1879) *Kindergarten practice, part 2*, London: A. Myers; for copies of pages in part two see figures 5.1 and 5.2 at the end of this chapter

<sup>9</sup> Gurney, *Practice, 1*; Gurney, *Practice, 2*; Payne, J. (1874) *The science and art of education*, London: H. King

of June 1876. By that month there were ten candidates and it was decided to hold the examination at the College of Preceptors in London: the college which Payne helped to create, where he was professor of education, and where Buss was a member of its Council.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, in December 1875 Gurney was elected to the Society's General Committee, its leading body, for the year 1876. By then Shirreff had replaced Doreck as president of the organisation. The nine others on this Committee included Payne, Buss, Grey, and Manning.<sup>11</sup> A year later she was again elected to the General Committee, although this time without Payne who had died in April 1876.<sup>12</sup> It is clear that Gurney was not only a founder of the FS but also a key member during the first two years of its development. As such she contributed to teacher training's growing professionalism. Nevertheless, in 1877 a considerable change took place in her relationship with this organisation. Signs of that change were present even before it took place.

Between November 1874 and November 1877 there were twenty-seven meetings of different FS committees for which an attendance record is extant. According to these minutes Gurney only attended eleven of those meetings.<sup>13</sup> This level of absence contrasted with the frequency with which she attended the meetings of the GSC. One explanation for this difference may have been Gurney's strenuous involvement in the opening of twelve high schools from 1873 to 1876. Two additional explanations for her relative neglect of the FS may have been that in March 1875, with Buss, she was elected for the first time to the Council of CLC and in March 1876, with Grey and

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<sup>10</sup> NFF/1/1/1 (2<sup>nd</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1875, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1876)

<sup>11</sup> NFF/1/1/1 (7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1875)

<sup>12</sup> NFF/1/1/2 (5<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1876) 1, attached printed sheet

<sup>13</sup> NFF/1/1/1 (4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1874 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1876); NFF/1/1/2 (5<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1876 - 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1882)

Stanley, she was elected for the first time to the Council of the LSEUT.<sup>14</sup> Despite these extra responsibilities Gurney continued for a period to involve herself in policy decisions at the FS. In June 1877 at one of the General Committee meetings ‘Miss Gurney suggested that the Kindergarten Departments of the (Girls’) Public Day School Company should be placed under instruction’. Over forty years later Hastings recalled that Gurney was particularly keen on that training. By July there were 30 candidates for the FS examination at the College of Preceptors and classes for kindergarten teachers were scheduled to start there in October 1877.<sup>15</sup> Gurney was using her networked position across the GSC and the FS to enhance the effectiveness of both organisations. In the process she continued to advance female education and professionalism.

However, in November 1877 ‘Miss Gurney expressed her intention of withdrawing from the Committee’ and simultaneously it ‘was agreed to ask Miss Buss whether she would be able to attend more frequently’.<sup>16</sup> Gurney’s intention signalled an end to her leadership of the FS. Indeed, in December 1877 neither she nor Buss were elected to the General Committee for 1878 and Gurney never again joined it. By then it seems she was also not involved in the Translation Committee or the Committee for Examinations, both of which may not have survived beyond early 1876.<sup>17</sup> The records do not disclose if pressure of time was the reason why Gurney cut her close ties with the FS. Any significant conflict with Grey and Buss seems unlikely as Gurney continued to work with them across the GSC, the CLC, and the LSEUT. The view that Buss was a suitable substitute for Gurney within the Society, if she was able to increase

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<sup>14</sup> CLC/1 (31<sup>st</sup> March 1875) 68 - 69; EM1/3/1 LSEUT report, 1877, 4

<sup>15</sup> NFF/1/1/2 (5<sup>th</sup> June 1877) 21, (21<sup>st</sup> July 1877); GDS9/6/1 Papers on the preparatory departments (3<sup>rd</sup> April 1922)

<sup>16</sup> NFF/1/1/2 (13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1877) 29 - 30

<sup>17</sup> NFF/1/1/2 (11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1877) 37, attached printed sheet; NFF/1/1/2 - 10, 1877 - 1920

her involvement, indicates the equality of esteem afforded to the two women by their peers.

Overall, as in the case of 1863, 1877 represented a turning point in Gurney's career. It clarified the nature of her future work. Indeed, along with her break from the FS, she also experienced one with the TTRS. This body was created by the WEU in late 1876. However, unlike Buss, Grey, and Shirreff, Gurney was not elected to its first Council in early 1877 despite being part of its provisional committee.<sup>18</sup> This rejection probably gave her the opportunity to develop her mental resilience as well as her focus, as did the February 1877 threat of losing her place on the GSC Council due to the hostile manoeuvres of some shareholders. That campaign did not succeed but it may have warned her, among other warnings, of the need to converge her efforts on the organisations that mattered most to her. It may have resembled her relationship with the TTRS and fed into her decision about the FS.

Moreover, after 1877 Gurney would still have been able to monitor the work of the FS and the TTRS through members of her network who remained within one or both of the organisations. This group would have included not just Buss, Grey, and Shirreff but also Louisa Brough, who was the secretary of the WEU as well as of the TTRS. Her usefulness to Gurney in the late 1870s could have been further assisted by the WEU, the GSC, and the TTRS sharing office space in London's Brompton Road.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Gurney's continuing overview was probably made even easier by the events of the 1880s. In May 1878 the TTRS established a female training college for secondary school teachers, known from the 1880s as the Maria Grey College. In 1883 the London Kindergarten Training College, planned for and established by the FS in

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<sup>18</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1876, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1877)

<sup>19</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1879) 16; TTRS report, 1879



1878 and 1879, amalgamated with the TTRS's college.<sup>20</sup> Not only that, but after June 1881 Gurney had a new conduit into the affairs of the FS when for the first time Amelia Gurney was recorded as attending one of its General Committee meetings. Amelia continued to do so for the rest of the year. In December Gurney's sister was further elected to this key body for 1882.<sup>21</sup> The density and intensity of Gurney's network did not need to falter despite her official severance from the TTRS and the FS. In addition, these threads of influence were clear examples of how Gurney could use her network to stay at the centre of female education's development without always needing to work for all of its organisations.

ii

Cheltenham Ladies' College

Gurney was elected to the Council of CLC in March 1875 as part of a controversial re-organisation designed to lessen the power of local councillors, to strengthen the influence of councillors with a more national vision for the College, and to bolster the Council's number of women.<sup>22</sup> Buss was also elected to it at the same time. However, Dorothea Beale, as Lady Principal of the College, was not permitted to be a member and Gurney, Buss, and the three other female members were considerably outnumbered by this governing body's eighteen men.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, two of these men were Lyttelton and Alfred Barry. As in the case of Lyttelton, Barry already had a connection to Gurney: he was a member of the WEU's Central Committee between 1873 and 1875. In 1876 he went on to be elected with her to the LSEUT's Council.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lilley, I. (1981) *Maria Grey College 1878 - 1976*, London: West London Institute of Higher Education, 9 - 23

<sup>21</sup> NFF/1/1/2 (18<sup>th</sup> June - 17<sup>th</sup> December 1881)

<sup>22</sup> Beale, D. 'The history of Cheltenham Ladies' College', *CLC Magazine* (1890) 26 - 28

<sup>23</sup> Beaumont, J. 'D. Beale', *ODNB*

<sup>24</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873 and 15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1874); *Morning Post* (30<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1875); *Daily News* (31<sup>st</sup> March 1876); Pearce, E., revised by Hilliard, D. 'A. Barry', *ODNB*

In addition, two other members of Gurney's network joined the CLC's Council: Fitch in 1877 and Jane Chessar, sometime before her death in 1880 at the age of 45. Chessar was also involved with Gurney in work for the WEU, the FS, the College of Preceptors, and the LSEUT.<sup>25</sup> During the late 1870s it seems that behind Gurney's work for the College lay not just an educational reputation made at the WEU and the GSC but also firm connections, the first of which was possibly Emelia Gurney's strong friendship with Beale. Indeed, Gurney remained on its Council for 32 years, until October 1907.<sup>26</sup> This employment was the second longest of her career, although it was not as complex as that with the GST.

Of the 163 Council meetings which took place when Gurney was a CLC councillor, she attended 79. Buss and Fitch were CLC councillors for shorter periods than Gurney as Buss died in 1894 and Fitch in 1903, nevertheless they attended the meetings at a similar rate of slightly less than 50%. Buss was present at 44 of her possible 99 and Fitch was present for 61 of his 129. Not unexpectedly, Gurney's commitment to the business of CLC appears to have equalled that of others more lauded in educational historiography. Her attendance rate was assisted by the transfer of most meetings to King's College in London after June 1880 and to the Great Western Hotel in Paddington after July 1895. The use of this railway hotel again indicates how new nineteenth-century modes of transportation and communication assisted Victorian educational enterprise. The councillors living in both Cheltenham and London gained easier access to each other through the use of the GWR's steam trains and London terminus. Overall, there were only 26 meetings held in Cheltenham

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<sup>25</sup> Raikes, *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham*, 197 and 387; Martin, J. 'J. Chessar', *ODNB*; also see this chapter 5.2.ii

<sup>26</sup> CLC/3 (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1907) 204

during Gurney's years as a governor but she still went to just under half of them.<sup>27</sup> The use of King's College may have been prompted by the appointment of Barry as chairman of CLC's Council from the late 1870s until 1896. He was also the principal of that university college during those years. In 1883 Buss offered the NLCS as an alternative London space for the councillors' meetings but her suggestion was declined.<sup>28</sup> Her offer can be interpreted as an attempt to continue the 1875 feminisation of the Council.

Indeed, as soon as possible Gurney appears to have begun a campaign to extend Beale's power. In July 1875 she successfully proposed that in the first instance all nominations for pupils go to the Lady Principal and only if Beale found potential pupils unsuitable, rather than suitable, should the Council's Finance Committee then have the power to question her decision-making about nominations. Also, in June 1876 Gurney put forward the motion that Beale be 'empowered' to appoint examiners, with Fitch as one of them. Then, in June 1881 Gurney proposed and Buss seconded the motion that examiners be appointed 'on the recommendation of the Lady Principal'.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Gurney, again with the support of Buss and Fitch, sought to enhance the power of Beale's headship through two educational schemes. Between November 1886 and June 1887 Gurney gained the Council's approval for a plan, which Buss also worked on, to improve the College's kindergarten. While in October 1897 Fitch proposed and Gurney seconded the motion that Beale seek the Education Department's recognition of the College's teacher-training programme.<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting here that what appears to have been a deliberate policy on Gurney's part, as a

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<sup>27</sup> CLC/1 - 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1872 - 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1912)

<sup>28</sup> CLC/1 (10<sup>th</sup> March 1877 and 20<sup>th</sup> October 1883); CLC/2 (11<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1896)

<sup>29</sup> CLC/1 (3<sup>rd</sup> July 1875) 80 - 81, (17<sup>th</sup> June 1876) 92, (25<sup>th</sup> June 1881) 269

<sup>30</sup> CLC/1 (27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1886 and 18<sup>th</sup> June 1887); CLC/2 (21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1897)

CLC governor, to enhance a headmistress' power was not one she pursued within the GST. One obvious explanation for this difference is that there was no need to standardise the work of the College's one headmistress, unlike that of the many GST headmistresses. Of maybe more importance as an explanation was the intensity of parts of Gurney's network. Gurney, Buss, Fitch, and Beale trusted each other because, outside of the ties of CLC, they were already familiar with each other and in different combinations they had already worked together for female education.

Another difference between Gurney's work for CLC and the Trust was her lack of time-consuming committee work for the College, one which enhances the argument that her decision not to continue with the FS was also prompted by the demands of her work for the GSC. Gurney never joined the leading committees of CLC's Council, such as the General Purposes Committee, the Executive Committee, and the Finance and Estates Committee.<sup>31</sup> Nor did she join its less permanent ones, even that of November 1886 for the extension of the College's kindergarten despite fully supporting its plans. Nevertheless, she made one exception to this rule which can be interpreted as a sense of responsibility for the College's future, if not a desire to control it. Dorothea Beale died in November 1906 at the age of 75 while still in office. Gurney attended her funeral service in Gloucester Cathedral.<sup>32</sup> Then in December at a special meeting of the Council Gurney was elected, with eight others, to the Selection Committee who were given the task of creating a short-list of candidates for the vacant post of Lady Principal.<sup>33</sup> Three of their four meetings were held in London at the Great

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<sup>31</sup> CLC/4 (21<sup>st</sup> April 1875 - 28<sup>th</sup> March 1896); CLC/5 - 6 (11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1896 - 29<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1908)

<sup>32</sup> CLC/3 (27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1906); *CLC Magazine* (spring 1906)

<sup>33</sup> CLC/3 (1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1906)

Western Hotel. By the afternoon of an early March day in 1907 the final short-list was completed and sent to the Council.<sup>34</sup>

Of the five candidates considered for inclusion during the morning of that day, Gurney definitely knew at least three of them as they had worked in GST high schools. Ethel Gavin had been the headmistress of Shrewsbury High School and by the time of the selection process she held that post at Notting Hill and Bayswater High School. In 1907 Rosalind Haig Brown was headmistress of Oxford High School, while Lilian Faithfull, before becoming the vice-principal of King's College Ladies' Department for over a decade, had been for a year in the late 1880s an assistant mistress at the Oxford school.<sup>35</sup> M. Wolseley Lewis, as she was named in the minutes, could have been the Mabel Lewis who was an assistant mistress of classics at Wimbledon High School when Beale's replacement was sought.<sup>36</sup> The last candidate discussed in the morning had the surname Powell. It is hard to believe Gurney did not also have previous knowledge of her, either as a GST assistant mistress or as a relation of Henrietta Baden-Powell who was an early councillor of the Trust.

Gurney tended to rely on the promotion of known staff to more senior GST posts, as part of a strategy of sponsored mobility, by which she sought to protect her version of professionalism among the female teaching force at secondary level.<sup>37</sup> In 1907 at CLC she and others appear to have pursued the same closed strategy, except in one respect: mistresses of the Trust, past and present, were being asked to consider transferring their skills to a non-GST school. This situation reflected Gurney's power

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<sup>34</sup> CLC/3 (5<sup>th</sup> March 1907)

<sup>35</sup> Sayers, J. 'E. Gavin' *ODNB*; Avery, G. 'L. Faithfull', *ODNB*

<sup>36</sup> Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 134

<sup>37</sup> Gurney's use of sponsored mobility was identified by using the lists of past headmistresses and their posts in Kamm, *Indicative past*, appendix II

within both the CLC's Council and that of the GST. It also reflected her use once more of a networked borderland between private and public relationships and spaces to assist her control of educational events. In response, others on the Selection Committee did not prevent this networking from dominating the ultimate choice of candidates. The instruction to the women that 'Personal canvass of members of the Council is deprecated' did not clarify the committee's position on conflicts of interest.<sup>38</sup> Instead, it could not easily deny that Gurney's 35 years of reliance on her network, among other methods she had used to run the GST's schools, had made her a Victorian and Edwardian governor of almost unique experience in the selection and retention of headmistresses.

When the short-list was received by the Council only Haig Brown's name was missing. Later in March, at the GWR's London hotel, Gurney and eighteen other councillors conducted the interviews which preceded the announcement that Faithfull was Beale's successor. Even the procedures they used were previously decided by Gurney and the rest of the Selection Committee.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, that meeting was the last Council meeting she ever attended. In October 1907 Gurney submitted a letter of resignation.<sup>40</sup> Maybe she felt her work for the CLC was complete now that the new Lady Principal was chosen. She may also have felt the absence of Beale, after 32 years of working together, signalled a need to resign. There may even have been an element of chagrin behind her decision. Faithfull had a greater connection with Barry's work at King's College in London than with Gurney's work at the GST, thus she was the least likely of all the candidates to be influenced by her in the future. In contrast, certainly Gavin and possibly Wolseley Lewis were and continued to be more closely

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<sup>38</sup> CLC/3 (1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1906 - 20<sup>th</sup> March 1907) attached printed instructions to the candidates

<sup>39</sup> CLC/3 (20<sup>th</sup> March 1907)

<sup>40</sup> CLC/3 (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1907)

linked to Gurney. Gavin succeeded Hastings as headmistress of Wimbledon High School in 1908. Mabel Lewis remained as that school's classics mistress until 1912 and returned to it as headmistress in 1918.<sup>41</sup> Gurney was able to go on assisting and controlling their careers despite any setback that may have occurred to her and their plans in 1907.

Overall, Gurney's three decades of work for CLC was important to the College, to Beale, to a version of female professionalism, and to her own career. It added to CLC's national status as a female equivalent of the male public school. It added to Beale's power within the College and to the intensity of female headmistresses' networks. Finally, it added to her own role as a leading educationalist of her time, although her feminist and networking approaches may not have achieved as much as she hoped.

iii

### The Princess Helena College

The PHC was originally founded in 1820 as the Adult Orphan Institution at Regent's Park in London but by 1882 it was situated in the capital's area known as Ealing. It also changed its name in 1879 as it turned into a training college for female teachers, secretaries, and book-keepers, as well as into a high school for girls. In December 1888 Gurney was 'asked' to join the College's Council and that Council's Executive Committee and Education Committee. This request came as part of a reorganisation during a period of financial concern. Galton, who worked with Gurney in the WEU and GSC, was invited to join the three bodies at the same time. Fitch and Bartley, whose work was also connected to that of Gurney from the 1870s through the WEU, GSC, LEA and CLC, were already members of the Education Committee. In addition,

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<sup>41</sup> Kamm, *Indicative past*, 212

Bartley was an existing member of the Council and Executive Committee. His resignation from all three in January 1889 suggests that Gurney and Galton may have been encouraged by him to be his substitutes.<sup>42</sup> Thus once again, it is possible to identify not just a growing professional reputation but intense networking as a factor behind the development of Gurney's career. Another link, albeit of less intensity, was demonstrated when Gurney joined the PHC. Its president from 1886 to 1923, Princess Helena, was the sister of Princess Louise, the WEU's president from 1871 to 1881 and the patron of the GST from 1872 to 1939.<sup>43</sup>

The College's offer to Gurney was repaid by the length and nature of her work for it. Galton died in 1899 after ten years of service but she remained on the PHC's Council and Executive Committee for nearly 28 years, until June 1917. She attended 75 or 78% of the 96 meetings those two bodies held between March 1888 and November 1915. In contrast, Joseph Savory, who was elected as chairman of both in May 1889, attended 62 or 65% of them.<sup>44</sup> The difference between those percentages suggests that Gurney was an important governor of the PHC and her responsibilities suggest that even more clearly. For example: in May 1895 it was resolved 'that the annual report should be submitted to Miss Gurney for revision previous to it being printed'. According to the limited records, she also edited the headmistress's report in May 1893 and March 1899.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it is probable that Gurney undertook those tasks during other years, especially as she had experience of them at the GSC. Moreover, she was among those councillors selected to appoint a new headmistress in 1902 and between 1892 and 1902 decisions over the employment of other staff were left to her

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<sup>42</sup> PHC report, 1887, 3, 4, and 7; PHC/1 (13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1888, 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. 1889)

<sup>43</sup> Van der Kiste, J. 'Princess Helena', *ODNB*; Stocker, 'Princess Louise'

<sup>44</sup> PHC/1 (16<sup>th</sup> July 1886 - 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1899); PHC/2 (6<sup>th</sup> March 1899 - 25<sup>th</sup> July 1923)

<sup>45</sup> PHC/1 (8<sup>th</sup> May 1893, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1895); PHC/2 (6<sup>th</sup> March 1899)



alone or with one other councillor.<sup>46</sup> Another GSC responsibility which Gurney replicated for the PHC was the selection and monitoring of examiners.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the financial experience she gained at the Company was put to use. In 1889 Gurney was asked to provide a statement on the GSC's procedure for the remission of fees due to absence. The procedure was then adopted by the Executive Committee. In the same year she was also allocated the right to sign cheques drawn on the account of the College, a right she exercised.<sup>48</sup> Another sign of her importance to the PHC's administration was that in December 1895 'Miss Gurney was requested to supply as heretofore the dates of terms for next year'. In addition, it is possible that those chosen by her imitated or accommodated the Company's dates because attached to 1892 and 1896 PHC minutes were GSC printed lists of terms.<sup>49</sup> This cross-over of information seems an example of either how far the governors relied on Gurney or of how far she imposed her will upon them. A final sign of her influence within the Ealing organisation was the use of her home in Kensington as the venue for at least two committee meetings in 1904.<sup>50</sup>

The Victorian and Edwardian records of the PHC are comparatively sparse and disordered. Indeed, there is no extant Education Committee minute book. Nevertheless, from the available details a familiar picture of Gurney's capacity for bureaucratic leadership, underpinned by her use of professionalism and networking, can still be extracted. It is clear that she transferred occupational skills and procedures which she developed at the GSC to her work for the PHC, just as she did to that for

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<sup>46</sup> PHC/1 (31<sup>st</sup> May 1892, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1897, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1897, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1898.); PHC/2 (12<sup>th</sup> June 1899, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1899, 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March 1902)

<sup>47</sup> PHC/1 (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1894); PHC/2 (1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1906)

<sup>48</sup> PHC/1 (5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1889, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. and 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1889)

<sup>49</sup> PHC/1 (7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1892, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1895, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1896)

<sup>50</sup> PHC/1 (10<sup>th</sup> Oct. and 5<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1904)

CLC. These patterns in her employment behaviour tend to demonstrate that she felt it important to professionalise female educational policy-making and administration, so as to make female secondary education identifiable as a unified and resilient sector within English education which could justify societal and governmental support of the sort she called for in 1871. This interpretation helps answer an obvious question about her career: why did she extend her work to individual female colleges, schools, and educational associations when she already had a group of GST institutions to lead which eventually numbered 38? Of course, another answer is that she had no idea which parts of this nascent sector would survive and therefore it was sensible to promote as many as possible. More simply, the sparse records also show that for nearly 30 years from the 1880s to the 1910s she helped to ensure the survival of one innovative training college for women and one innovative high school for girls, which together were known as the Princess Helena College.

## 2

### Responsibility at a higher and wider level

#### i

##### Associations

Gurney's work aimed to develop women's tertiary education as well as girls' secondary, elementary, and kindergarten education. Her work was in a sense holistic. She recognised that the different levels of education depended upon each other for exponential development and that, at times, educators, students, and pupils could learn in the same spaces and places. In addition, her concern for women's higher and wider education was not exclusively focussed on improving their teaching careers, although some of her work did just that. For example, she inspected the female teachers in the girls' department of the school in Wandsworth and as a councillor as well as a

committee member she fostered teacher training at the Company schools, the colleges in Cheltenham and Ealing, and the Froebel Society.<sup>51</sup> However, Gurney also saw women's recognised study of all subjects open to men as vital to female employment in careers beyond teaching.

Therefore, by 1874 she was a member of the Ladies' Educational Association's Executive Committee. Garrett Fawcett and Fitch, among others, were also members. The Association campaigned for women's systematic higher education, examination, and graduation at the University of London. Specifically, in that year it arranged lectures for women at UCL and petitioned London University's chancellor to allow them to sit degree examinations and graduate. In 1877 Gurney, with Garrett Anderson, was still involved in sending memorials about those matters. Finally, in 1878 Gurney, Garrett Fawcett, Shirreff, and three others were able to present an address of thanks, with approximately 2,000 signatures, to the Senate and Convocation of London University for its decision to open those examinations and awards to women.<sup>52</sup> Also, in 1878 Gurney, with Grey and Barry, was present at a committee meeting for the establishment of a Kensington college for women which would be run under the auspices of the university's King's College.<sup>53</sup> Eventually in 1885 a Ladies' Department was opened and Lilian Faithfull became its vice-principal in 1894, before taking up her post at CLC.

As in the case of other levels, when seeking female education at tertiary level Gurney did not limit her professional space to England and Wales. Gurney travelled

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<sup>51</sup> Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); Davis, *History*, 15 - 27; *CLC Magazine* (1890), Beale, 'History' 29; NFF/1/1/2 (5<sup>th</sup> June 1877) 21

<sup>52</sup> LEA Executive Committee memorial (16<sup>th</sup> April 1874) and LEA prospectus, 1873 - 1874, University of London and UCL archives; Women's Library 9/10/108 post card from E. Garrett Anderson to M. Gurney (10<sup>th</sup> May 1877); *Times* (14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1878); *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1878)

<sup>53</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> July 1878) 113

to France, Italy, and Germany for more than recreation and between 1878 and 1881 she became a referee for a women's college at Eisenach in Germany whose principals were 'Miss Wood' and 'Fräulein Moeder'. The former may have been related to Susan Wood, the first headmistress of the GSC's Bath High School from 1875 to 1882. On at least eight occasions Gurney's name was used in the advertisements for English students to attend this college.<sup>54</sup>

Also, in 1892 and 1893 Gurney, with Garrett Fawcett, Buss, and five other women formed what Garrett Fawcett described in a letter as the 'Royal Commission on Women's Work. Education Sub-committee'. They met at her London home in Gower Street and were granted £100 by that 'Royal Commission' to send 'a representative to report on American education, as shown at Chicago and elsewhere'. In total they sent fourteen women by steam ship and train on the transnational voyage of research. The others were funded by 'City Companies' and by the Gilchrist Educational Trust, which in those two years were petitioned by Gurney, Garrett Fawcett, and Buss for further financial support. Sara Burstall, at the time on the staff of the NLCS, and Elizabeth Hughes, head of the Cambridge Training College for female secondary school teachers, were among them.<sup>55</sup>

The work of the 'Sub-committee' appears to have been related to what was officially called the Royal Commission on Labour of 1891 to 1894. The Commission had to include the employment of women in its investigations and it made the

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<sup>54</sup> CH/J23/8, Letters from H. Stanley to M. Gurney (17<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1883, 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1891); post-card from M. Gurney to E. Hastings (17<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1900) WHS archive; *Times* (6<sup>th</sup> April 1878, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1879, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1880, 30<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1880, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1880, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1880; 6<sup>th</sup> April 1881, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1881); Gurney, albums; Kamm, *Indicative Past*, appendix II

<sup>55</sup> Ridley, *Buss*, 297 - 298; *Nottingham Guardian* (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1892); *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1893); Gilchrist Educational Trust, [www.gilchristgrants.org.uk/](http://www.gilchristgrants.org.uk/) (last accessed Sept. 2019); Le May, G. revised 'E. Hughes', *ODNB*

unprecedented step of appointing four female assistant commissioners, although none of them were members with Gurney of the Gower Street group. Nevertheless, it seems possible that it was this Commission which provided that group with the grant to investigate teaching outside of Great Britain.<sup>56</sup> One of their other sources of funding, the Gilchrist Educational Trust, was established in 1865 to propagate learning among women as well as men.<sup>57</sup> If not before, Gurney would have had the opportunity to become familiar with this organisation in 1886 and 1887 when it and the LSEUT worked together to establish centres of higher education. Also, she may have been encouraged to seek aid from the Gilchrist Trust in the early 1890s by Sadler, who was one of its trustees and another LSEUT councillor.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, in the 1890s Gurney still campaigned for the award of degrees to women, this time by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In 1895 she signed the Association for the Education of Women's statement on the issue and she was joined by 34 of the 35 headmistresses of the GSC.<sup>59</sup> That collective voice was another example of how her work was helped by the growth of her network's density and intensity across a quarter of a century.

However, in 1897 Gurney faced what she and others in her circle regarded as a serious threat to any progress they had made in the provision of female tertiary education: a women's university was proposed. In June and July members of Gurney's network campaigned against the proposal. Their greatest fears were that it would make

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<sup>56</sup> BPP C6894 - XXIII, Reports of the Royal Commission on Labour, 1893, concerning the employment of women, [www.archive.org/](http://www.archive.org/) and [www.bit.ly/](http://www.bit.ly/) (last accessed Nov. 2020); [www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/10/27](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/10/27) (last accessed Nov. 2019)

<sup>57</sup> Gilchrist

<sup>58</sup> *Times* (30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1887); *Manchester Guardian* (12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1889); *University Extension Journal* (Dec. 1895) London, 41; *UEJ* (Dec. 1896) 36

<sup>59</sup> *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1895)

women's higher education inferior to that of men and women would again be excluded from universities originally created for men. Bryce opposed the idea when speaking at the NLCS. 151 members of the Association of Headmistresses wrote to the *Times* criticising it. Once again the GSC headmistresses were almost unanimous in their response to an issue, as 32 of the signatures on the letter belonged to them. In December a conference at Royal Holloway College for women in Surrey took place to debate the matter. Gurney, in her role as the Company's representative, attended with Garrett Fawcett and Fitch in order to speak publicly against the scheme. She also spoke of women's need for 'recognised examinations' at university colleges.<sup>60</sup> Maria Grey, by then in her eighties, was unable to attend but she wrote to Bryce also expressing her opposition. Gurney encouraged Grey to write to him and, through several letters of her own, she kept Grey informed of the proceedings. In one of them she accurately predicted that the proposal was 'doomed'.<sup>61</sup> 1897 not only demonstrated how Gurney's network continued to support her career, it illustrated the growth of her public speaking skills. Another such illustration came in 1903 when she represented the GSC at the AHM's conference on 'Educational Questions'.<sup>62</sup>

Gurney also worked for women's wider education in different arenas. For example, in the 1880s she was on the General Committee of the Domestic Economy Congress and on the founding committee of the company behind the Forsyth Technical College for Women.<sup>63</sup> In the 1890s she became a member of the Home Arts and Industries Association and she joined Buss in the Royal Drawing Society of Great

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<sup>60</sup> GDS3/3/23 (24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1897) 128; GDS/A/2/4 Papers on the question of a university for women, 1897

<sup>61</sup> GDS/A/2/4 Letters from M. Gurney to M. Grey (29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1897 and 3<sup>rd</sup>(?) Dec. 1897); for copies of the first and last pages of the November letter see fig. 5.3 at the end of this chapter

<sup>62</sup> *Times* (26<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1903)

<sup>63</sup> *Morning Post* (7<sup>th</sup> April 1881); *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1888)

Britain and Ireland as a vice-president. Indeed, even before that latter appointment of 1891 Gurney seems to have exerted influence over some of the RDS's members. The columnist who announced it wrote that 'The examinations of the Drawing Society and the Girls' Public Day School Company were practically the same.'<sup>64</sup> In addition, in the 1900s she became a committee member of the Nature Study Exhibition Association. Once again it seems networking played a role, as Fitch and Lucy Cavendish were patrons of the Association, while Bryce and Sadler were also committee members. Gurney stated in a letter to the *Times*, that this branch of education was 'so full of promise'. Quite what she meant by this phrase is not clear but through it she gained advantage for the GSC, just as she did through her work for the FS, CLC, the PHC, and the RDS. 32 of the Company's schools displayed work in the Association's 1902 Regent's Park exhibition. According to a report by her, some of it was then sent on to Pretoria and Melbourne for further display.<sup>65</sup>

Another example of the diversity of Gurney's career was her work for female suffrage, which connected to her work for female education. In 1924 Fawcett saw both campaigns as key parts of the Victorian and Edwardian women's movement. From at least 1875 Gurney attended suffrage meetings with the Garrett sisters, Millicent and Elizabeth. Also, in 1878 she joined them and over thirty others in the production of a pamphlet entitled *Opinions of women on women's suffrage*. It was published in 1879 by the National Society for Women's Suffrage. Other contributors were Buss and Grey as well as the three GSC headmistresses, Neligan, Wood, and Edith Creak.<sup>66</sup> In addition, in July 1889 Gurney was a leading supporter of Garrett Fawcett's suffrage

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<sup>64</sup> *Times* (31<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1891); *Victoria Magazine* (1<sup>st</sup> Aug. 1896); Ridley, *Buss*, 226

<sup>65</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1902) 3; *Times* (16<sup>th</sup> April 1903)

<sup>66</sup> *Times* (31<sup>st</sup> May 1875); *EWB* (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1878); Stephen, B. (1927) *Emily Davies and Girton College*, London: Constable, 347

declaration. She was identified in the press as its third signatory, after Shirreff and Davies and before Beale and Buss. Stanley's declaration against female suffrage earlier in 1889 was an indication that the contemporary suffrage debate was not straightforward. Nevertheless, Gurney probably remained a suffragist until her death. For example, in 1899 she was present with Davies at a meeting of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies chaired by Garrett Fawcett and in 1911 she and her sister Amelia appear to have joined the suffragist boycott of the UK Census.<sup>67</sup>

Given how closely they laboured together over 40 years, it is understandable why Garrett Fawcett in 1924 remembered Gurney as one of the educational leaders of the women's movement. Despite the challenges and uncertainties, Gurney constantly extended her responsibilities in order to promote all the interdependent types and levels of female education. In particular, it was her work for the LSEUT and GC which clearly demonstrated the growth in her risk-taking and leadership.

## ii

### The London Society for the Extension of University Teaching

Gurney's involvement in the LSEUT reflected her capacity to move the boundaries of her feminine borderland into the masculine public sphere. At an early stage in her career she took, with others, an opportunity to enter into a space designed to serve the higher education of mainly lower middle-class and working-class men and turn it into one that would also serve that education for at least all middle-class women. Gurney's desire to do so when the opportunity arose was no secret. The third objective of the

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<sup>67</sup> *Leeds Mercury* (1<sup>st</sup> July 1889); *Standard* (28<sup>th</sup> March 1899); Fawcett, *What I remember*, 117 - 118; UK Census



WEU was to ‘aid all measures for extending to Women the means of Higher Education...such as Colleges and Lectures...and Evening Classes’.<sup>68</sup>

In June 1875 a committee was created under the presidency of George Goschen to draw up a scheme for extramural courses of university lectures, with examinations, in London. This was to follow the example of Cambridge where its university had run such a scheme since 1872. It was decided to create the LSEUT to oversee the London scheme. In addition, the universities in Oxford, Cambridge, and London were requested to appoint a board which would provide the lecturers and examiners, as well as grant certificates. This joint board was eventually established in 1878.<sup>69</sup> Before that, in March 1876 Gurney was elected with Grey, Stanley, and two other women as a councillor of the new LSEUT. The Council also consisted of twenty-six men. Two of them, Henry Austin Bruce and Barry, were already linked to Gurney through their work for the WEU and CLC in the early 1870s.<sup>70</sup>

However, Grey resigned in 1877 as she was ‘unable to give time to the work of the Society’. In contrast, until her death in February 1895 Stanley kept faith with Gurney. Thus, in April 1895 Gurney wrote in her review of Stanley’s educational work that she was a constant attendee at the Society’s Council meetings, which for a period of time were held at her central London home in Dover Street.<sup>71</sup> Gurney’s professional and networked relationship with Stanley did not last as long as that with Garrett Fawcett but it was also close. Across nearly 25 years within the WEU, GSC, and

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<sup>68</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) 32

<sup>69</sup> *Journal of the Society of Arts* (23<sup>rd</sup> June 1876) London; City of London Livery Companies Commission Report, 1884, 1, 252 - 257, ‘Evidences, 1882: London Society for the Extension of University Education’, London: Eyre and Spottiswode

<sup>70</sup> *Daily News* (31<sup>st</sup> March 1876); *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> April 1876) 162; *Times* (1<sup>st</sup> June 1876); EM1/3/1, 1877, 4; Cragoe, M. ‘H. A. Bruce’, *ODNB*

<sup>71</sup> EM1/3/1, 1878, 4; *Journal of Education and School World* (April 1895) London, 8; Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 37

LSEUT they developed common views on education and a supportive friendship. For instance, apart from their shared desire to expand female learning, they shared Payne's belief that pedagogy was an art as well as a science. In 1877 when Gurney's first guide to creative kindergarten teaching was published, Stanley wrote to her: 'I am tired of the mechanical side of teaching. I mean always teaching facts and not trying to improve the instruments by which we learn'. Moreover, in the many letters they exchanged Stanley addressed Gurney with increasing affection as time passed. Her first letters of the 1870s began with the formal words: 'My dear Miss Gurney' but by the 1880s and 1890s Stanley usually began with: 'My dear Mary' and in one she wrote: 'My dearest Mary...you are such a leading spirit'.<sup>72</sup>

Of course, Gurney was not a unique motivator of feminist educators. She was surrounded by a network of such people, including Stanley herself, wherever she worked. Indeed, Grey may have retired from the LSEUT after about a year but, in either 1885 or 1886, Garrett Fawcett joined Gurney, Stanley, Bruce, and Barry on the Society's Council, where she remained until the early 1900s.<sup>73</sup> In addition, Fitch, Sadler, Bartley, Galton, and John Llewelyn Davies, the brother of Emily Davies, also became councillors of the Society in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, once again it is Gurney's longevity of service which can be singled out. She served as a LSEUT councillor for over 25 years from March 1876 until at least November 1901. However, when the London University Board for the Promotion of the Extension of University

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<sup>72</sup> CH/J23/8 (18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1877, 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1888, and 10<sup>th</sup> March 1892)

<sup>73</sup> EM1/3/1, 1886, 7; *UEJ* (Jan. 1896) 56, (Jan. 1900) 51, and (Dec. 1901) 36 - 37

<sup>74</sup> EM1/3/1, 1886, 8; *UEJ* (June 1894) 144; *UEJ* (Dec. 1895) 41; *UEJ* (Dec. 1896) 36; *Times* (22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1895 and 28<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1899); Hort A. revised by Matthew H. 'L Davies', *ODNB*

Teaching took over the Society's work in 1902 neither she nor Fawcett were part of this new body.<sup>75</sup>

Gurney, Stanley, and Fawcett probably regarded the Society as a fortuitous means of providing higher education for women. There is no other more plausible reason for their support of it. They were unlikely to have given so much time and energy to an organisation they saw as mainly of use to male education, especially one particularly concerned for the higher education of the working-man. Many of the 26 founding male councillors may have failed to fully appreciate how these women intended to alter the work of the Society in some areas of London. The Society's 1883 annual report indicated this. With what seems an element of surprise the report explained that: 'At the 15 courses which were held in the afternoon the audience consisted mainly of women' as it did for a few of the evening courses. The author believed this was having a 'most salutary influence on the Higher Education of women' and that this effect was 'some of the most useful work of the Society'.<sup>76</sup> These conclusions were supported in 1890 by an examiner in political economy from Oxford University. He commented that the 'average level of the answers (of the 'Extension' students) is considerably higher than that of undergraduates who pass the University examinations'.<sup>77</sup> Many of those answers were probably written by women. If these assessments were accurate, then the Society's effect on female education can also be gauged from the statistics provided by the Society's president in 1885. Goschen spoke at the AGM of up to 3,000 students, taking up to 50 courses, at 25 lecture centres across London in that year alone.<sup>78</sup> Also, by 1889 the number of centres was near to 40 and it was claimed that

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<sup>75</sup> EM1/5 BPEUT attendance book, 1900 - 1933

<sup>76</sup> EM1/3/1, 1883, 11

<sup>77</sup> *UEJ* (Feb. 1890)

<sup>78</sup> *Times* (9<sup>th</sup> March 1885)

‘the movement has proved a special boon to women’.<sup>79</sup> It appears that from the 1880s the LSEUT’s public space was a feminine as well as a masculine one. Gurney and her network had not wasted the opportunity to use the Society for their own ends.

However, when considering Gurney’s specific contribution to the policy-making and administration of the Society and its centres there is a lack of evidence. Nevertheless, some of the strength of her influence may still be estimated from certain circumstances and opinions. By October 1876 courses of lectures had begun in five centres run by local committees. Four of these were in central London but, in contrast, the fifth was at a notable distance from the others. It was on the London and Surrey border in Wimbledon, where Gurney lived at the time. In November 1879 one commentator, who spoke of the success of that centre’s lectures, noted that the ladies who ‘chiefly’ attended had ‘easy’ access from other suburbs ‘by rail’. However, Goschen had another view on the cause of their ‘great success’. He was reported as saying at the centre’s meeting hall in the same year that ‘one member of the council of whom he must think in connection with the movement in Wimbledon was Miss Mary Gurney, who had laboured most assiduously from the beginning with them, and had given them constantly most valuable advice as to the progress of the movement’.<sup>80</sup> Given the evidence of Gurney’s other educational work it is feasible that his assessment of her impact on the LSEUT centre in Wimbledon, which opened a second site for lectures in 1880, was reasonably accurate, despite his congratulatory tone.

There is only one extant record of a single centre’s proceedings in the archive of the LSEUT. Unsurprisingly, it is that of the one in Wimbledon and it covers one

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<sup>79</sup> *Women’s Penny Paper* (21<sup>st</sup> Sept. 1889) London, 11

<sup>80</sup> GDS12/25/1 Letter from H. Elphinstone to the GSC (5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1879); Gurney, album, 1878 - 1903; JWEU (15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1880)

decade. It appears women, apart from attending lecture courses, also organised their delivery. In 1891 36 of that centre's 40 committee members were women. In 1900 39 out of 45 were women. Also, only seven out of 31 meetings had a man present and never more than one. This centre probably would not have survived without these women's bureaucratic efforts and behind those efforts Gurney's influence can be detected more than a decade after she had moved away from the area. In 1891 Hastings, who was the headmistress of WHS, was on that centre's local committee.<sup>81</sup> Such female middle-level leadership and networking may not have been unusual elsewhere, particularly in those areas with a dominant middle-class nature where it was mainly women, not men, who still required tertiary education.

Gurney's influence was also likely to have been behind the July 1877 proposal to form another lecture centre. This proposal was made at a meeting held in the GSC's Notting Hill and Bayswater High School. In addition, it may have been partly behind the creation by January 1878 of a centre at the Hampden Gurney School in Marylebone.<sup>82</sup> Lastly, Gurney may have encouraged Jane Chessar's involvement in the LSEUT. In May 1876 Chessar attended a meeting held to establish a branch of the Society in London's Camden. The two women already shared membership of the WEU and the FS as well as a connection through Chessar's membership of the College of Preceptors' Council. Also, sometime between 1876 and 1880 they were simultaneous members of CLC's Council.<sup>83</sup> At the least, the growing intensity of Gurney's network was again on show.

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<sup>81</sup> EM1/12

<sup>82</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1876, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1877, and 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1878)

<sup>83</sup> *Graphic* (17<sup>th</sup> May 1876) London; Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*, 72 - 96; Martin, 'Chessar'

Given Gurney's commitment to the LSEUT it is worth considering why she did not become a member of the Society's replacement. This may have been because she believed, as it did, that an important aim had been achieved when London University took over its work.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, the university's new BPEUT may have seen Gurney as an unsuitable candidate. Until 1907 it chose only one female member and that was Dr Sophie Bryant, successor to Frances Buss as headmistress of the NLCS and a member of the SEC. Then, until 1911 no woman sat on the Board except during parts of 1909 and 1910.<sup>85</sup> In 1902 the last chairman of the Society's Council wrote: 'work throughout [its 27 years] has been organised by able men'.<sup>86</sup> Gurney's work for the LSEUT had already begun to fade from memory. Nevertheless, from 1876 Gurney and some of her feminist network seized the chance to expand the extramural higher education of London's women and supported its expansion for the rest of the nineteenth century.

iii

### Girton College

Gurney's work for Girton College could be said to be the most striking of her work for the higher education of women. It challenged the masculine nature of Victorian England's tertiary education more directly than her work for the LSEUT which did not seek to place women within an established university. Girton College sought to do so.

In 1869 it opened at Hitchin in Hertfordshire after nearly two years of planning by Davies and others. By 1873 it had moved to Girton, a few miles outside of central

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<sup>84</sup> *UEJ* (Dec. 1902) 36

<sup>85</sup> EM1/5

<sup>86</sup> *UEJ* (Dec. 1902) 36

Cambridge. It set its academic standard at the same level as the male university colleges close to it, although its female students were unable to receive degrees from Cambridge University despite passing the required examinations. During the institution's first three years Charlotte Manning, as well as Stanley and Shirreff, were three of its five Mistresses. When they were not acting in that role they were members of the governing body, which was known as the Executive Committee and after December 1910 known as the Council. From 1872 to 1875 Davies was also the Mistress, before resuming her position as a governor. She remained a member of GC until 1920. However, in 1904 she resigned from the Executive Committee over the decision to allow incumbent Mistresses to join it.<sup>87</sup> By that date Gurney was also one of its members, thereby maintaining and strengthening her networked connection with the College which had begun during its foundation and early history through her relatives, Russell and Emelia Gurney, as well as through WEU, GSC, FS, and LSEUT colleagues.

Gurney's official work for GC began in June 1894 and lasted for over 23 years until her death. She was elected as a governor of the institution a month after she had given evidence to the Bryce Commission. That public display as an expert witness on female education was the first time she had played such a role in a government inquiry and it may have cemented a conviction that she was a suitable candidate for the post. Also, Bryce was another founder of the College and he was still a member of its Executive Committee in the 1890s.<sup>88</sup> In addition, at that time other members of her network were coming to the end of their official connection with the College. Stanley

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<sup>87</sup> GC report, 1869; GCGB2/1/2 (Jan. and Feb. 1871) 1 - 3; GCGB2/1/17 (20<sup>th</sup> April 1904); GC report, 1920; Stephen, *Emily Davies*; Stephen, B. (1933) *Girton College 1869 - 1932*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bradbrook, M. (1969) '*That infidel place*', *a short history of Girton College 1869 - 1969*, London: Chatto and Windus; Delamont, 'Davies'; Sutherland, 'Manning'

<sup>88</sup> GCGB2/1/14 (12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1898)

retired from the governing body in 1894 and Shirreff in 1896, while Emelia Gurney ended her membership of GC in 1895. This situation may have increased the pressure on Gurney to act.<sup>89</sup> It can be argued that she compensated for losing three indirect links with the College by replacing them.

Moreover, she may have been encouraged to join the Cambridge enterprise in 1894 by the presence of two of her cousins' daughters. From 1893 to 1897 they were the first of her immediate family to attend GC as undergraduates. Emma Gurney Salter, previously at the GSC's Notting Hill and Bayswater High School, was the daughter of William Henry Gurney Salter. Winifred Mary Gurney-Smith was the daughter of Alfred Gurney-Smith. In addition, it is possible another member of Gurney's family was at the College from 1892. She was Louisa Mary Gurney, daughter of Henry Palin Gurney and also an ex-pupil of the GSC's school in Notting Hill.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, other members of Gurney's network beyond Cambridge continued to form a backdrop to her work there in the years after 1894. Katherine Jex-Blake worked with Gurney on GC's Executive Committee and Council from the 1890s to the 1910s. Their earliest thread of connection was probably the joint educational endeavours of Katherine's aunt, Sophia Jex-Blake, and Russell and Emelia Gurney of the 1860s and 1870s. During the 1880s that connection developed further when Katherine was an assistant mistress of the GSC school in Notting Hill. She then returned to GC, where she had been a student from 1879 to 1883, to lecture as well as govern the College. Eventually, when amid controversy she was chosen as its Mistress

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<sup>89</sup> GCGB2/1/13 (5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1894); GC reports, 1894 - 1896

<sup>90</sup> Butler, K. and McMorran H. (eds.), (1948) *Girton College Register 1869 - 1946*, Cambridge: Girton College



in 1916, Gurney was still a governor and she oversaw that choice.<sup>91</sup> It is worth noting here that the links between the Jex-Blake family and the Gurney family did not end there. Thomas Jex-Blake, who was born in 1832 and became headmaster of Rugby School from 1874 to 1887, had a London home at 13 Ennismore Gardens, Kensington. From at least 1901 Gurney lived close by at 69 Ennismore Gardens. Of course this did not necessarily mean that Thomas, who died in 1915 only two years before Gurney, shared a relational and spatial network with his neighbour of the educational sort his sister and daughter already possessed. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that at the very least Gurney and Thomas shared a common ground, one which would have intensified further if Sophia or Katherine lived at number 13 between 1901 and 1913. As it was Katherine certainly did live there by 1913.<sup>92</sup>

Fitch and Elizabeth Manning were two other members of Gurney's network who worked with her on GC's Executive Committee after 1894. Fitch, who was already linked to her through the LEA, the PHC, the LSEUT, and CLC, did so until his death in 1903. Manning, who was linked to Gurney through the FS of the 1870s, did so until her death in 1905.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, Florence Gadesden, assistant mistress and headmistress of the Trust between 1883 and 1919, joined Gurney on the Committee from 1902 to 1904 as an affiliated member representing certificated students of the College.<sup>94</sup> Also, Caroline Digby, who was a GST councillor and committee member from 1897 until the 1920s, worked on GC's Executive Committee and Council with

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<sup>91</sup> For the probable connection through her aunt see chapter 3.3.ii; Todd, *S. Jex-Blake*; Perrone, F. 'K. Jex-Blake', *ODNB*

<sup>92</sup> GCGB2/1/20 (21<sup>st</sup> March 1913) 180 - 181; Sadler, M. revised by Curthoys, M. 'T. Jex-Blake', *ODNB*

<sup>93</sup> GCGB2/1/13 - 18 (5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1894 - 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1908)

<sup>94</sup> GCGB2/1/16 - 17 (4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1902 - 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1904); Sondheimer, J. 'F. Gadesden', *ODNB*

Gurney from 1906 until 1913.<sup>95</sup> Lastly, from 1915 Maurice Llewelyn Davies, nephew of Emily Davies, shared membership with Gurney of the GC's Council as well as that of the GST. In addition, in 1915 he joined her on the Trust's Education Committee and Sites and Building Committee, where he was chairman of the latter until at least 1918.<sup>96</sup>

Davies and Kjaer have both argued that hierarchical governance and networked governance sustain each other.<sup>97</sup> Gurney's activity for the College certainly illustrated this concept, as did most of her work for female education. Networked ties as well as professional demands held sway over Gurney's almost a quarter of a century's employment with GC and as a result she seems to have developed a strong attachment to the place. So much so, she eventually bequeathed the bulk of her wealth to it. Also, she may have found in its academic milieu a pleasure she was denied when a young woman. The same blurring of private and public spatial boundaries probably underpinned her gifts to the College made while she was alive. For example, she helped create what was known as the Charity Reeves Prize for English and donated money, works of art, and clocks for its buildings. Amelia joined her in this generosity. Together they financed the 1907 extension of the chemical laboratory with an adequate gift of £1,000, which is the equivalent in today's terms of nearly £125,000. Moreover, in her own will the younger sister also made the college her residuary legatee.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> GCGB2/1/18 - 20 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1906 - 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913); GDS6/3/1/3 - 6 (29<sup>th</sup> July 1902 - 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1920); GDS3/8/22 Papers relating to Council member, C. Digby

<sup>96</sup> GCGB2/1/21 (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1915); GDS6/3/1/5 (28<sup>th</sup> May 1915); GDS6/5/1/4 (13<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1915) 190; GDS3/7/5 Papers relating to Council chairman, M. Llewelyn Davies

<sup>97</sup> Davies, *Challenging governance theory*; Kjaer, *Governance*

<sup>98</sup> GCGB2/1/18 (17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1906) 138 and (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1907) 232; GCGB2/1/19 (7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1909) 147, (21<sup>st</sup> June 1910) 247, and (20<sup>th</sup> June 1911) 357; GC reports, 1917, 11, 1922, 27 and 1923, 12; Probate Registry; inflation calculator; also see chapter 7.1.ii

Another blurring of private and public boundaries, this time relational, took place when a 'Friend' of Gurney was called upon to help ensure her will benefitted GC. Eleanor Margaret Allen, GC's bursar from 1906 to 1929, was appointed in 1915 one of the two sisters' executors. Allen carried out that legal responsibility until 1925. Also, until her own death four years later she went on caring for the legal affairs of Gurney's eldest brother's widow, Marie. Indeed, Allen kept a diary of her work as executor and it gives an intriguing glimpse of that blurring, as well as of how records can be lost to history. For example, in 1923 she wrote: 'May 17 + 18 Spent at Ennismore Gardens, sorting papers with Mrs William Gurney. Put all letters in a large trunk for the inspection of Mr Travers Buxton [Amelia's other executor]. Wrote to Mr Buxton saying what we had destroyed viz catalogues, advertisements, old lecture notes, Mr Alford's sermons'. A letter written by Allen to Buxton a few days earlier revealed her initial reaction to his suggestion that she 'destroy "all the rubbish"...I had not thought of destroying anything...only clear papers out of the furniture'.<sup>99</sup>

In contrast to their gifts of wealth, in 1910 the sisters also gave GC a small image of a young woman named Edith Taylor. It was accompanied by a poignant handwritten inscription about the death of this Edith in 1876, just before she was to join the college as a student. At the moment, both items hang together at the foot of one of GC's stairwells with portraits and photographs of its founders and supporters. However, the only extant professional photograph of Gurney, taken in the year she joined GC's governing body, does not as yet hang with them.<sup>100</sup> The background to the modest gift

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<sup>99</sup> GCAR/2/6/38, memorandum in executor's accounts, diaries of E. Allen (1917 - 1929), letter from E. Allen to T. Buxton (14<sup>th</sup> May 1923); for a copy of a photograph of Allen see illustration 5.1 at the end of this chapter

<sup>100</sup> GCG2/1/19 (21<sup>st</sup> June 1910) 247; for a photograph of the image of Taylor and of the accompanying handwritten inscription see illustration 5.2 at the end of this chapter; for a copy of the only extant photograph of Gurney see illustration 1.1 at the end of chapter 1

of 1910 is unknown. The mother in the inscription is not J. S. Mill's step-daughter, who was also called Helen Taylor, although before 1910 Gurney and his step-daughter had communicated and worked with each other. In 1876 Gurney corresponded with that Helen about her candidature for the London School Board. Gurney was 'much interested' in it and she advised her not to state that she was a 'secularist...as it will hardly be understood'. They also shared with others the position of signatories of the 1876 WEU memorial to the Charity Commissioners about the lack of women governors in endowed schools for girls.<sup>101</sup>

Gurney's impact on GC was not only financial. Overall, between July 1894 and June 1917 she was present at 142 of the 239 meetings of its governing body. Her work for the GSC, the PHC, the LSEUT, and CLC continued in parallel until the 1900s. When it ended for the last two she replaced it with work for the Victoria League. It is in the light of these other responsibilities, particularly for the GST, that Gurney's attendance rate of about 60% should be judged. Also, as in the case of her work for CLC, Gurney needed to travel some distance outside of London to attend some of the meetings, about a third of the 142 took place in Cambridge.<sup>102</sup> For instance, her first meeting in November 1894 was at the College, although her last in June 1916 was at her Kensington home. Indeed, between May 1904 and June 1916 there were 39 in London but only eight of them were held elsewhere than her home and after March 1911 69 Ennismore Gardens was exclusively used. Between October 1897 and April 1904 Davies also, exclusively, used her St Marylebone homes at 12 York Street and

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<sup>101</sup> *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> April 1876) 54; *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> May 1876) 207; Women's Library Mill - Taylor Collection XV, letter from M. Gurney to H. Taylor (6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 18(76?))

<sup>102</sup> GCG2/1/13 - 21 (20<sup>th</sup> July 1894 - 19<sup>th</sup> June 1917); for a comparative overview of Gurney's and other councillors' attendance rates at meetings of the governing bodies of CLC, GC, and the PHC see table 6.1 at the end of chapter 6

at 6 Montagu Mansions for London meetings of the governing body.<sup>103</sup> It seems fair to conclude that Gurney became Davies's replacement as the convenor of meetings outside of Cambridge. This particular substitution indicated some of Gurney's importance to GC, not only as a governor at the centre of College affairs but also as a facilitator of others' work. From a networking perspective she was a key to its operation by providing a more accessible London space in which GC could attract supporters to its governing body from other institutions and thereby raise its reputation in the educational world.

In addition, the survival of some of Gurney's spatial networking was indicated by the use of Katherine Jex-Blake's home in Ennismore Gardens for the two London meetings of the College's Council in 1917 and the use of the board-room at the GST's headquarters in Westminster's Broadway Court for its ten London meetings of 1918 to 1922.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, the survival of some of her relational networking was indicated by Maurice Llewelyn Davies' continuation of his simultaneous work for GC and the GST until 1922 and by the appointment of Jex-Blake as a Trust councillor in 1925. Indeed, Emily Davies' nephew was chairman of the GST's Council from 1920 to 1929 and went on to work for its Education Committee until at least 1934, while Jex-Blake went on to become a vice-president of the Trust.<sup>105</sup>

Apart from creating a space for GC in London, Gurney enhanced her influence over its affairs by acting as chairman of its governing body on occasions. She quickly took on that role in July 1896 and she equalled Davies' record as chairman during the

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<sup>103</sup> GCGB2/1/13 (5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1894); GCGB2/1/21 (21<sup>st</sup> June 1916); GCGB2/1/17 - 21 (17<sup>th</sup> May 1904 - 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1917); GCGB2/1/13 - 17 (8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1897 - 20<sup>th</sup> April 1904)

<sup>104</sup> GCGB2/1/21 - 22 (27<sup>th</sup> March and 19<sup>th</sup> June 1917, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1918 - 20<sup>th</sup> June 1922)

<sup>105</sup> GCGB2/1/22 (17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); GDS3/5 Attendance of Council and committee meetings, 1931 - 1966; GDS3/8/56 Papers relating to Council member, K. Jex-Blake; Perrone, 'K. Jex-Blake'

years they worked together. Both of them led the meetings a dozen times. Furthermore, as the decade passed the frequency of Gurney's chairmanship rose as Davies' declined. However, in comparison, Fitch was chairman on 26 occasions between November 1894 and his death in 1903. No one else equalled his frequency in that period.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, it can be argued that through the chair Gurney began to replace Davies as a key governor of the Executive Committee even before she took over Davies' role as the provider of its London base. This may have been with Davies' approval before and after she resigned from that body in 1904.

When chairman Gurney dealt with a gamut of business ranging from bursar's reports, financial investments, architect's extensions, and drainage problems to the appointment of lecturers and examiners, salaries of staff, records of teaching, and scholarships. All matters she had experience of dealing with, especially at the GSC. Gurney's chairmanship may also have brought some advantage to the Company. At the least, Gurney's role as a conduit between the two organisations had the opportunity to grow. For example, when she was chairman a request was made in 1897 by the mistress of classics, Alice Anderson, at Sheffield High School and in 1898 by the headmistress, Maria Skeel, at Nottingham High School that pupils be exempted from parts of the GC Latin scholarship examination. The first request was successful, the second was not. This partial lack of success also indicated that Gurney's networking was not always as effective as she may have desired.<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, Gurney's professional and networked expertise was used for more than hosting and chairing meetings. This was amply demonstrated when GC was planning a large extension. A. Waterhouse and Son were commissioned to design new

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<sup>106</sup> GCGB2/1/13 - 17 (5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1896 - 20<sup>th</sup> April 1904)

<sup>107</sup> GCGB2/1/14 (13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1897 and 9<sup>th</sup> May 1898)

wings, a chapel, a cloistered courtyard, a large vaulted dining-hall, and a towered entrance. The choice of that firm indicated the governing body's strength of ambition, including that of Gurney. In the 1860s the firm had renovated Oxford University's Balliol College. Eventually there was a degree of compromise made between this ambition and the social expectations applied to female colleges in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Rooms were positioned off corridors as opposed to off more isolated and exposed separate stairwells. Lecture rooms and a sick bay were sited within the college as opposed to outside of it. Despite this compromise, it can be argued that GC's accommodation eventually equalled that of male colleges and its more feminised architectural features influenced the building of later male halls of residence.<sup>108</sup>

To facilitate the project, in January 1900 Gurney was requested by the Executive Committee to enquire and report on the methods for raising money adopted by other educational institutions. By February she supplied a statement on loans taken by CLC, the GSC, the PHC, and the James Allen Girls' School in Dulwich. During May it was decided, after considering Gurney's report, that the College would approach the Cambridge branch of Barclay and Co. of London for money secured by the College's title deeds. This was the bank which had undergone a merger with Gurney and Co. of Norwich in 1896. In June, with Gurney in the chair, the offer of £45,000, which was the equivalent in today's terms of about £5.5 million, was accepted by the Committee. The amount was borrowed between July and November, with Gurney present at the meetings in October and November 1900 when the arrangements were finalised.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Vickery, M. (1999) *Buildings for blue-stockings: the architecture and social history of women's colleges in late Victorian England*, London: Associated University Presses, 7 - 38, 171

<sup>109</sup> GCG2/1/15 (9<sup>th</sup> Jan., 13<sup>th</sup> Feb., 29<sup>th</sup> May, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 9<sup>th</sup> Oct., and 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1900); inflation calculator

In the same year as Gurney provided this networked financial knowledge, she also began to drive forward changes in GC's system of scholarships. On one of the occasions she was chairman of the Executive Committee, she oversaw the formation of a new sub-committee for scholarship examinations.<sup>110</sup> This concern over scholarships echoed her concern as chairman of the GSC's Education Committee. It anticipated the creation of GC classics scholarships by her and Amelia in their wills. It also helps explain the Trust headmistresses' choice of a GST classics scholarship at GC as the most appropriate way to commemorate her work.<sup>111</sup> Gurney may also have led that sub-committee, as her name appeared first on its 1901 report. Moreover, when chairman in 1902, she proposed that another sub-committee monitor a trial of new regulations for scholarship and entrance examinations. Once again Gurney's name figured first on its two 1903 reports. Her last recorded action on this matter was then to propose the permanent adoption of the new regulations.<sup>112</sup>

More of Gurney's notable work for GC occurred in 1909 when she was elected to a third sub-committee which was given the task of reporting upon a controversial reorganisation scheme submitted by the Certificated Students Association and upon a petition from former students who opposed the scheme. Its report appeared in May 1910. After the re-drafting of the scheme by Gurney and Jex-Blake, with others, as well as the appointment of a registrar to compile a roll of alumnae, a new Union of Certificated Students was in place by January 1911. During the re-drafting legal advice was sought from the London solicitors which acted for GC and the GST known as Shaen, Roscoe, Massey and Co. It had been established by the radical lawyer William

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<sup>110</sup> GCGB2/1/15 (12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 1900)

<sup>111</sup> Last wills of Mary and Amelia Gurney; GC report, 1923, 24; GDS21/2/4

<sup>112</sup> GCGB2/1/16 (7<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June 1901, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. and 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1902); GCGB2/1/17 (5<sup>th</sup> May and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1903)



Shaen in the middle of the nineteenth century. He was a supporter of female education and his mother may have been from the same Solly family as Charlotte Manning. Gurney was already familiar with the firm's partners through her work for the Trust and they were also her personal lawyers. From 1917 they administered her estate and that of her sister, Amelia.<sup>113</sup> Here again was an indication of the tight network and blurred boundaries which underpinned her career.

The Executive Committee had changed its name by the time Gurney last attended one of its Cambridge meetings in April 1915. Between that last official visit to GC and the last meeting of its Council held at her home in June 1916, she played a role in another controversy which was far more crucial to the College's future than that concerning certificated students. At 69 Ennismore Gardens in December 1915 the Council decided not to advertise the vacancy for Mistress of the College, created by the resignation of E. Constance Jones. Instead it decided that only members of the College would be informed about the selection of a new Mistress in the Lent term of 1916.<sup>114</sup> However this decision stoked a row which had already developed. It was summarised in a letter dated a few days before the December meeting and written by a representative of past students. Isabel Dickson wrote:

the vacancy should be advertised...it should be open to distinguished outsiders as well as distinguished Old Girtonians...[the new Mistress] should be at least as important a person as the vice-chancellor of a new university. She should be so well-known [that] her appointment would confer as much distinction on the College as on herself. She should be the obvious person to be called into consultation about any new development affecting the interests of university women...We are quite clear that for many years past Girton has been less and less an influence in the various spheres of women's work elsewhere...There is considerable truth in the assertion frequently made that the chief function of

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<sup>113</sup> GCGB2/1/19 (4<sup>th</sup> May and 21<sup>st</sup> June 1909, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. and 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1910); GCAR2/6/38; Simm, J. 'W. Shaen', *ODNB*

<sup>114</sup> GCGB2/1/21 (27<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1915)

Girton College is to turn out successful, but not necessarily, outstanding headmistresses.<sup>115</sup>

However, despite the opposition, the Council went ahead with its plan. In February 1916 Jex-Blake was proposed, seconded, and appointed to the post in its meeting held at GC, after the ‘chairman asked whether there were any further nominations, [and] no other name was brought forward’.<sup>116</sup>

The lack of contested mobility, the strength of sponsored mobility, and the concomitant networking which lay behind that appointment was indicated by the speed and simplicity of the proceedings. Interestingly, the process at GC in 1916 highlighted the contested element of the selection process at CLC in 1907, although overall that process was also dominated by networked sponsorship. Together, the two events demonstrated that Victorian and Edwardian feminist educators were prepared to limit and slow their risk-taking at times and consequently, in the case of GC, Gurney could look forward to leadership by a close member of her circle with connections which went back to the 1860s. She could believe that the College under the classicist Jex-Blake would remain as she knew it. These circumstances also help explain why only death ended her membership of its Council. By then, it can be argued, Gurney’s two decades of uncompromising but cautious governance had made her a valuable leader of the early university women, both in a facilitation and financial sense.

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### The Victoria League

One of the last organisations through which Gurney was able to promote female education was the Victoria League. Even more so than the LSEUT, this organisation

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<sup>115</sup> GCG2/1/21 (14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1915) 123

<sup>116</sup> GCG2/1/21 (16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1916)

has been under-investigated by historians, although it survived into the twenty-first century by adapting its outlook and policies to a different context. From its headquarters in London it now works within the Commonwealth of Nations to support education.

Gurney's membership of the VL began during the Edwardian period, soon after the League was formed. Her work for it was transnational but at that time it was only concerned with nations within British territory. Also, her work was underpinned by an exclusive approach to race and ethnicity as the VL assisted the education of only those of European descent within that territory. In contrast to this particular exclusivity, the League involved Gurney in a wider care for the education of men and boys than she had undertaken during the Victorian period. It is possible that feminism, transnationalism, and imperialism in her thinking overcame any reservations she had about her VL work also benefitting male education.

The VL's 'preliminary' meeting took place in early April 1901 at 10 Downing Street in London's Westminster. 25 women came together to form 'a Women's Association' designed to be 'independent of party politics' and to engender 'intercourse' as well as 'help' between 'different parts of the [British] Empire'. The South African War of October 1899 to May 1902, also known as the Second Boer War, and the death of Queen Victoria earlier in January 1901 formed a back-drop to the formation. The instigators of the meeting, 'Lady Edward Cecil' and 'Miss Balfour', were likely to have been closely related to the British Prime Minister of the time, Lord Salisbury, and to his 1902 successor, Arthur Balfour. They were responding to a request from the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa for 'a closer union' across the colonies through 'the interchange of information and hospitality, and by co-

operation in any practical scheme tending to foster friendly understanding'. At the April meeting twelve of the 25 were aristocrats, another was Garrett Fawcett.<sup>117</sup>

From this initial group of women an Executive Committee was created which was given, among other responsibilities, the task of vetting future members of the League. It was decided they had to be British subjects and subscribe not less than one pound per annum. The latter restriction would have tended to limit membership to the middle and upper classes of British society. That committee first met in early May 1901, at 55 Lowndes Square in Chelsea. After the middle of July 1901 office premises were used instead and by at least 1904 they were at Dacre House on Victoria Street in Westminster. The Executive Committee continued to meet up to once a week throughout the years before the Great War. In contrast, the VL Council, which was made up of all members and which supervised the Executive Committee and its sub-committees, met annually. Its first three meetings were also held at Downing Street, when no more than about 50 women attended. However, by 1903 the Council numbered very nearly 300 women. Therefore, from 1905 the Imperial Institute in Kensington became a venue for the Council's annual meetings and they were followed by public AGMs. In April 1908 'over 2,000 people' attended the AGM. Meanwhile, beyond London, local branches of the League developed across British territory.<sup>118</sup>

Gurney joined Fawcett as a VL councillor in April 1903 and by June 1903 she was also a member of the Executive Committee's Education Sub-committee. She continued to work for that subsidiary body until at least July 1912 but did not do so after March 1913. Nevertheless, she remained a councillor for the rest of her life. In

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<sup>117</sup> VL/2 (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1901); VL report, 1903

<sup>118</sup> VL/1 (2<sup>nd</sup> July 1903, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1904, and 29<sup>th</sup> June 1905); VL/2 (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1901 - 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1903); VL/3 (19<sup>th</sup> March 1903 - 13<sup>th</sup> July 1905) 1 - 314; VL/4 (17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1907 - 19<sup>th</sup> May 1910) 1 - 164; VL/5 (9<sup>th</sup> June 1910 - 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1913) 1 - 360; VL reports, 1903, 1 - 3, 1904, and 1908

addition Amelia Gurney probably became a councillor in 1910 and remained so until her death in 1923, while Fawcett resigned from the League's Council in 1921.<sup>119</sup> An examination of circumstances and reasons behind Gurney's entry into the VL's central bureaucracy lends weight once again to the roles of professionalism and networking in her career. As in the case of her work for the LSEUT, she probably saw this work as a potential way of promoting female education despite the VL's co-educational approach. In addition, Fawcett could vouch for Gurney's suitability for Council membership and Sadler, another LSEUT colleague, may have encouraged her to join him in the League's work for education.

Sadler, who was still employed at the Board of Education and did not become Professor of Education at Manchester University until 1903, was approached in the middle of 1901 by the VL's Executive Committee to become one of the first members of its newly created Education Sub-committee. He was also asked to recommend other high-ranking educationalists for membership and by July 1901 the Sub-committee were 'authorised to arrange public meetings for lectures...[on imperial topics in] the colonies as well as in England'. The members' other main tasks were to establish a library of books and lantern slides concerned with imperial matters for loan throughout British territory and to arrange educational communications across that territory using essay writing and other competitions on imperial subjects. Indeed, by November 1902 Millicent Fawcett had agreed to give lectures, supported by slides, on behalf of the VL in South Africa. She completed her lecture tour by the end of May 1903.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> VL/2 (3<sup>rd</sup> April 1903) 17; VL/5 (18<sup>th</sup> July 1912) 270; VL report, 1903, 15; VL report, 1910; VL report, 1913, 2; VL register of subscribers, 1901 - 1925

<sup>120</sup> VL/2 (27<sup>th</sup> June 1901) 63, (10<sup>th</sup> July 1901) 71, (16<sup>th</sup> July 1901) 77, (24<sup>th</sup> July 1901) 85, and (18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1902) 238; VL/3 (28<sup>th</sup> May 1903); VL report 1903, 16 - 17

When Gurney joined the subsidiary body in June 1903 it had seven members. Apart from Sadler and Gurney, another member of educational note was Halford Mackinder who by 1904 was the Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The Director of the Imperial Institute from 1903, Wyndham Dunstan, also became a member in 1904. By then Dunstan was already linked to Gurney's network through the GST. By at least 1902 he was on the GST's Council and later in the 1900s he worked with her on its Finance Committee, Examinations and Studies Committee, and Art Teaching Committee. She may have encouraged him to join the VL's educational body, just as Sadler may have encouraged her to do so. By 1907 it had increased to sixteen members, including a secretary and librarian, and it was known with more importance as the Education Committee. Indeed, by 1912 it was seen as 'the second main head of the League's activities' and from 1910 to 1912 there were about 1,150 books and over 3,300 slides available for loan. Moreover, the slides could be accompanied by pre-written lectures.<sup>121</sup>

Although Gurney's and the other members' relative attendance rates at VL meetings are unclear within the extant evidence, her effectiveness in the Education Committee was indicated by her selection to represent the VL at the League of the Empire's conference sometime in 1907 or 1908. It was also indicated by the Executive Committee's agreement that she 'be asked to accept the Chairmanship' of the Personal Correspondence Sub-committee in October 1909. Again, it is unclear if Gurney took on that extra role which was designed to encourage communication across British territory. If she did, at the latest it was only until April 1911 as the responsibility, with

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<sup>121</sup> GDS1/3/1 Papers relating to a reorganisation for receipt of grants, letters (19<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> May 1902); GDS6/4/6; GDS6/6/1; GDS17/4/3; VL/5 (18<sup>th</sup> July 1912) 270; VL reports, 1903 - 1907; VL report, 1912, 2 and 9; Henry, 'Dunstan'

its increasing volume of work, was distributed to the VL's local branches some time in 1910 or early 1911.<sup>122</sup>

Even if Gurney did not take it on, through the Education Committee she was able to expand transnational links between schools. By 1909, under VL supervision, 72 schools in Great Britain were in correspondence with similar schools in the colonies. In addition, in March 1909 the headmistresses of the GST's Clapham High School and Sheffield High School, Elizabeth Woodhouse and 'Miss Escott', with six other public school headmasters and headmistresses, including Lilian Faithfull of CLC, were made vice-presidents or honorary members of the VL Council due to the 'encouragement' they had given to the League's work. The intensity of Gurney's spatial and relational network grew a little more with those three female appointments and the two which could benefit the GST's reputation may have been engineered by her.<sup>123</sup>

Moreover, in an Executive Committee meeting of July 1905 Gurney's argument for the VL 'affiliating with' the GSC was considered, an affiliation suggested by the Company. The process was approved and from that year some GST high schools paid fees to the League and established 'Junior Associate' VL branches. In the same meeting another of Gurney's arguments, 'that some co-operation should be affected' with the LCC, was considered and a meeting with Maud Lawrence, the Board of Education's Chief Woman Inspector, was approved. Here again it is possible to see how Gurney sought to benefit the Trust and increase her influence over the state's new educational bureaucracy through her work for the VL.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> VL/4 (14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1909); VL/5 (17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1910), (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1910); VL reports 1908 - 1910, 1911, 16 and 1912, 11

<sup>123</sup> VL report, 1909

<sup>124</sup> VL/3 (13<sup>th</sup> July 1905); VL reports 1907, 1911, and 1912

Gurney's networking capacity was also reflected in the creation of a VL branch in Wimbledon soon after she joined the League in the 1900s. This event was reminiscent of the formation of a LSEUT centre there soon after she joined that Society in the 1870s. The branch's local committee was elected in early February 1904 at Wimbledon High School. The venue was provided 'by the kindness of Miss Hastings', its headmistress and member of the local committee of the LSEUT centre in Wimbledon by 1891. Furthermore, in 1904 eight women made up the new VL branch's local committee, one of whom was 'Mrs Rawlings', most likely the wife of Gurney's cousin. From about 1863 to 1895 Rawlings had worked with Gurney on the governing body of the girls' department in the BFSS's elementary school at Wandsworth and later, in October 1908, 'Mrs Edward Rawlings' was proposed by Gurney for election to the VL's Council. Finally, Fawcett's delivery of 'a public lecture' in Wimbledon on behalf of the League by the end of March 1904 further indicated Gurney's use of her connections to assist the start and survival of the VL's presence in that area.<sup>125</sup>

Overall, Gurney appears to have justified Sadler's trust in her abilities as a high-ranking educationalist. She assisted the growth of the VL's educational schemes, educational resources, and membership. In the process she also further raised her own professional profile. In addition, her work for the VL demonstrated, once again, that she sought to connect aspects of her career through networking as well as through procedures and activities. The Victoria League was just the last organisation in which she began to do this.

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<sup>125</sup> VL/3 (28<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1904) 135; VL/4 (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1908) 63; VL reports 1904, 25 and 1908



### A transnational perspective

Although Gurney's work for the lower, higher, and wider provision of female education was primarily based in England, she did seek to enhance its provision elsewhere and that effort can be seen as a discrete part of her career. In addition to her transnational work for the VL, Gurney acted as a referee for the women's college in Eisenach in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Also, there is evidence that she visited the educational exhibition held in Paris in 1900 and not simply to inspect the GSC's displays. Indeed, it is hard to believe she did not investigate the local provision when travelling for pleasure to places such as Germany's Berchtesgaden in 1883 or Italy's Venice and Naples in 1891, as many of the newspaper cuttings in her albums concerned female education abroad and some came from foreign publications.<sup>126</sup> Her work in the GST's planning committee for the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition and the 1908 International Drawing Exhibition also demonstrated her transnationalism.<sup>127</sup> In addition, sixteen of her extant publications involved translation from German and Italian into English.<sup>128</sup> Gurney's fluency in the German language and understanding of other modern and ancient European languages underpinned her entry into educational circles abroad and her authority in England was probably strengthened by this entry. In 1895 she urged 'the study of Latin, both for its interest and its educational value'.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, Gurney expanded her work further than the European continent. It was stated in an obituary that she supported Indian students who visited England and in 1903 she promoted in South Africa and Australia some of the GSC's high

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<sup>126</sup> CH/J23/8 (17<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1883 and 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1891); Postcard (17<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1900); Letter (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922); Gurney, albums; *Times* (6<sup>th</sup> April 1878, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1879, 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1880, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1880, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1880, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> April 1881)

<sup>127</sup> GDS3/3/33 (23<sup>rd</sup> October 1907) 129

<sup>128</sup> Gurney, *Educational conferences*; Gurney, *Practice, part 1*; Gurney, *Practice, part 2*; *Antiquary* (Oct. and Dec. 1906, Dec. 1907, June 1908, July 1912, Sept. 1913, May and Oct. 1914); *CLC Magazine* (spring 1906, autumn 1908, spring 1910, spring 1915, spring 1916)

<sup>129</sup> GDS17/1/1 Report on subject conference, 1895

schools' work for the NSEA.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, in 1892 and 1893 Gurney worked to secure Gilchrist Scholarships and other funding for school mistresses to study in the USA. Indeed, in 1896 Rose Kingsley, daughter of the authors Charles and Frances Grenfell Kingsley, when interviewed by the press in New York argued for the transnational effect of Gurney's work. She felt that the high schools in Japan, India, and Australia were similar to GSC high schools.<sup>131</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter analyses the career Gurney pursued beyond that for the BFSS, the WEU and the GST. It shows the breadth of her risk-taking and how her educational commitments had varying types and degrees of impact as she continued her apprenticeship in educational governance. By the 1890s this work in the FS, CLC, the PHC, and the LSEUT had also contributed to her transformation from a leader still in training to one who had the skills to appear before Bryce and the SEC as a representative of the GSC, to join GC's Executive Committee alongside Davies and Fitch, and to be regarded, with the director of the LSE, as a high-ranking educationalist by Sadler at the VL. In addition, the chapter analyses her governorship of GC and the VL as an experienced leader during the late Victorian period and Edwardian period as well as covering her work for campaigns seeking the opening of university degrees to women, for female suffrage, and for smaller educational enterprises such as the DEC, the FTCC, and the NSEA.

However, although Gurney's late nineteenth-century career broke through some of the barriers facing female education it was restricted by her and others'

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<sup>130</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1902) 3; *Times* (16<sup>th</sup> April 1903); *Journal of Education and School World* (Nov. 1917)

<sup>131</sup> *EWR* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1893) 64; *New York Times* (1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1896) 9; Vance, N. 'C. Kingsley', 'F. Kingsley' *ODNB*

preoccupation with the needs of females of the same class, race, and ethnicity as themselves. Despite this, in the early twentieth century she continued to work almost exclusively for the extension of middle-class, white and European female education. She halted her work for working-class pupils of the BFSS and only through the VL did she address the educational needs of men and boys, albeit mainly those who were again middle-class and white with European origins. In the 1900s it seems that Gurney felt uncertain about the survival of her and others' previous extension of female education, hence the continuation of her primary focus. Indeed, after the turn of the century she had to deal with familiar and different challenges, particularly conflicts with the English government's new Board of Education over the consequences for the GST of its secondary education policies. These consequences included an existential threat to all of the Trust's high schools. Chapter six concentrates on those conflicts in the final two decades of her career.

Map 5.1: Sites connected to Gurney's work in England



Original map (without numbers) from Pitman I. (1898) *Pitman's commercial geography of the world*, London: Isaac Pitman, 153

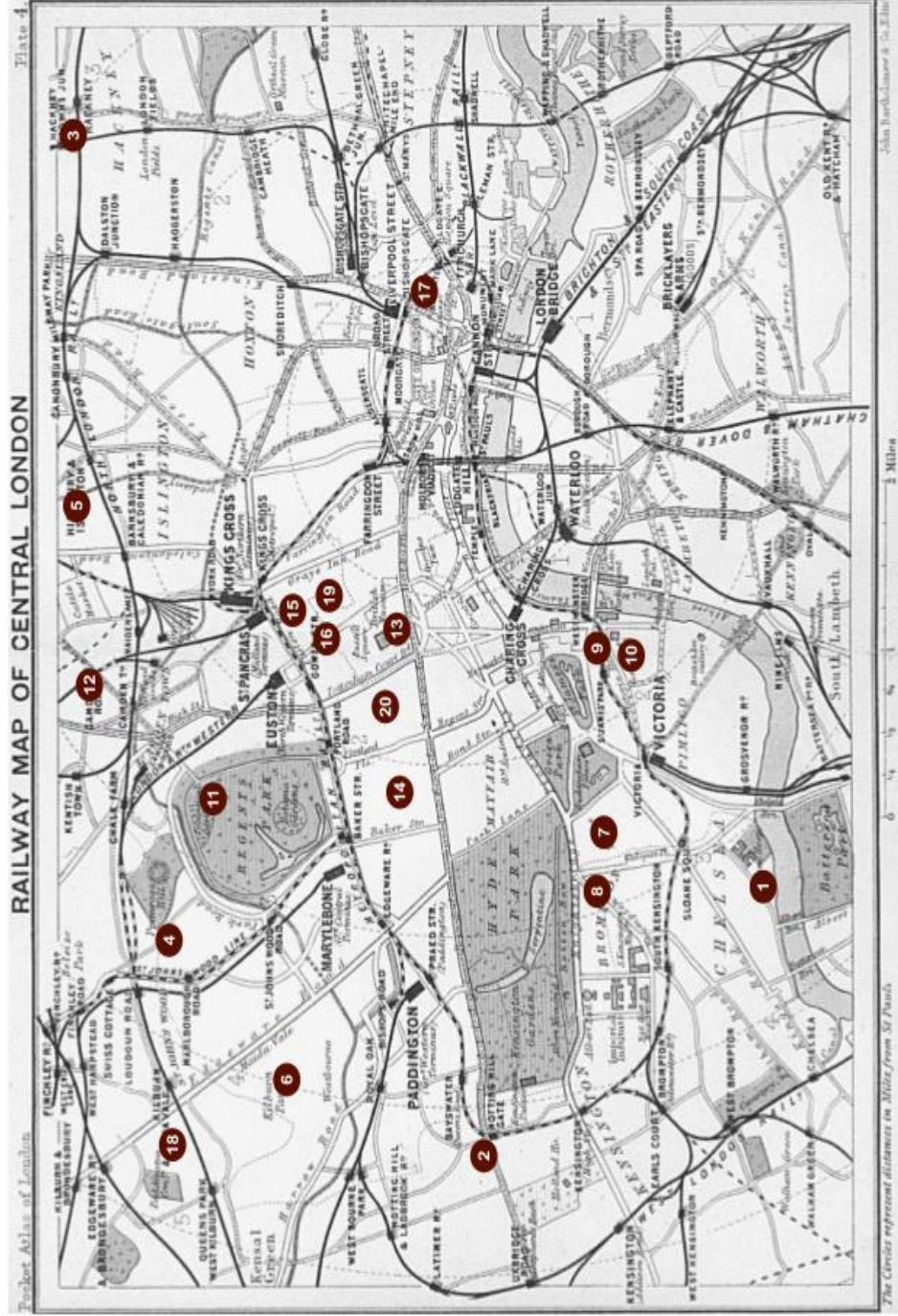
*Key to map 5.1:*

The 37 GPDSC/T high schools and the middle school with their original names and dates of foundation, including the 17 London schools (indicated by an asterisk)

- |                                      |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Chelsea 1873 *                    | 20. Weymouth 1880        |
| 2. Notting Hill and Bayswater 1873 * | 21. York 1880            |
| 3. Croydon 1874 *                    | 22. Wimbledon 1880 *     |
| 4. Norwich 1875                      | 23. Newton Abbot 1881    |
| 5. Hackney 1875 *                    | 24. Portsmouth 1882      |
| 6. Clapham Modern (middle) 1875 *    | 25. Clapham 1882 *       |
| 7. Nottingham 1875                   | 26. Bromley 1883 *       |
| 8. Bath 1875                         | 27. Tunbridge Wells 1883 |
| 9. Oxford 1875                       | 28. Carlisle 1884        |
| 10. St John's Wood 1876 *            | 29. Sutton 1884 *        |
| 11. Brighton 1876                    | 30. Shrewsbury 1885      |
| 12. Gateshead 1876                   | 31. Brixton Hill 1887 *  |
| 13. Highbury and Islington 1878 *    | 32. Sydenham 1887 *      |
| 14. Maida Vale 1878 *                | 33. Dover 1888           |
| 15. Sheffield 1878                   | 34. Swansea 1888         |
| 16. Ipswich 1878                     | 35. East Liverpool 1881  |
| 17. Dulwich 1878 *                   | 36. East Putney 1893 *   |
| 18. Blackheath 1880 *                | 37. Newcastle 1895       |
| 19. Liverpool 1880                   | 38. Birkenhead 1901      |

The detail for this key came from Sondheimer and Boddington, *The GPDST 1872 -1972*

Map 5.2: Sites connected to Gurney's work in central London



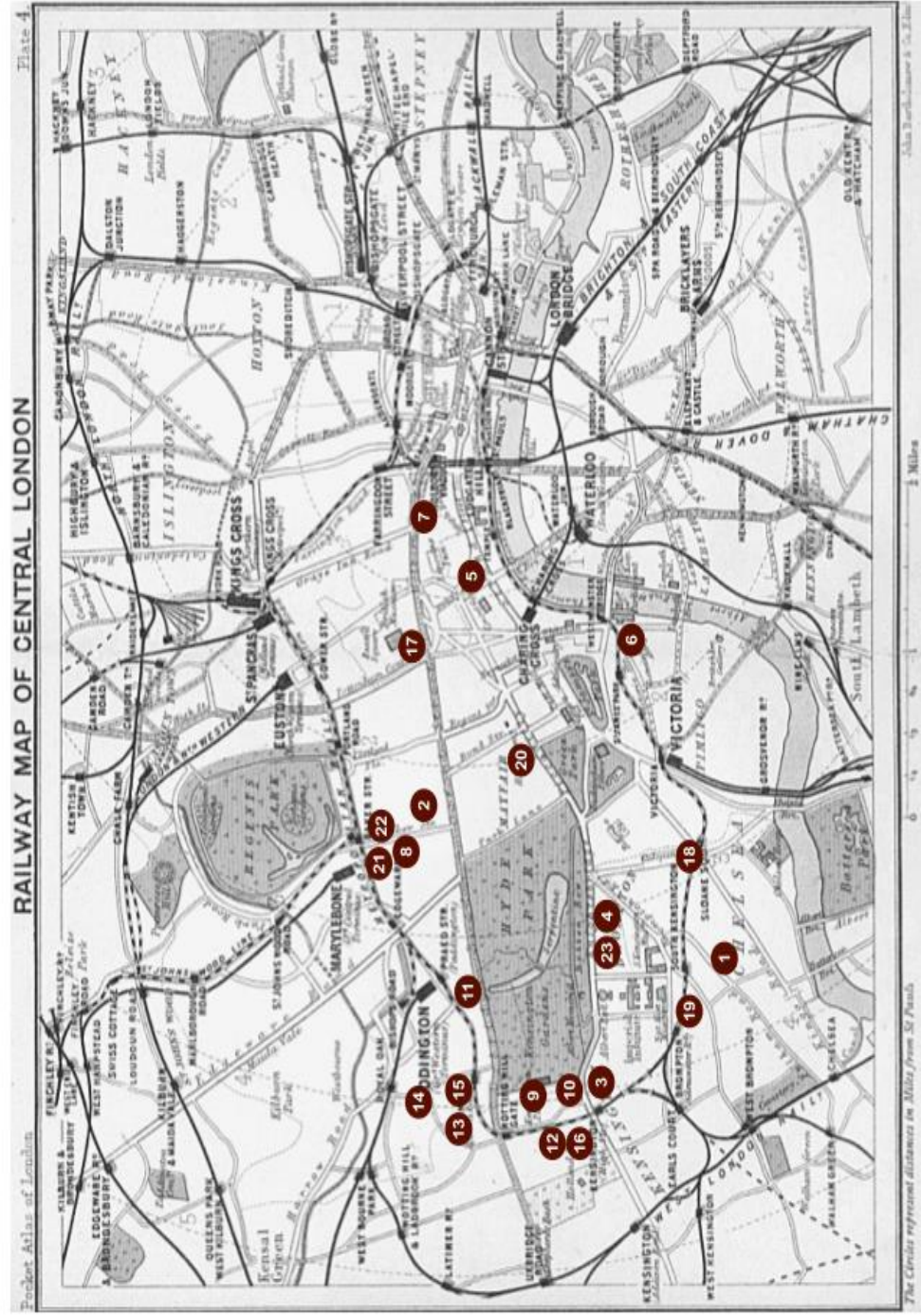
Original map (without numbers) from Bartholomew, J. (1899) *Pocket atlas and guide to London*, London: J. Walker



*Key to map 5.2:*

1. Durham House, Durham Place, Chelsea (GSC Chelsea High School from 1873)
2. Norland Square, Notting Hill (GSC Notting Hill and Bayswater HS from 1873)
3. Hackney (GSC Hackney HS from 1875)
4. Winchester Road, St John's Wood (GSC St John's Wood HS from 1876)
5. Northampton House, Highbury (GSC Highbury and Islington HS from 1878)
6. Warrington Crescent, Maida Vale (GSC Maida Vale HS from 1878)
7. 61 Sloane Street, Chelsea (GSC head office in 1872)
8. 112 Brompton Road, Kensington (GSC head office by 1873)
9. 21 Queen Anne's Gate (GSC head office by 1885)
10. Broadway Court, Westminster (GST head office by 1911)
11. Regent's Park (PHC until 1882)
12. 46 Camden Street and Camden Road, Camden Town (NLCS)
13. Bedford Square, Bloomsbury (Bedford College)
14. 66 Harley Street, Marylebone (Queen's College)
15. 31 Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury (FS London College for Kindergarten Teachers)
16. Fitzroy Square, Bloomsbury (FS LCKT, 1880s)
17. Bishopsgate (TTRS Training College)
18. Brondesbury (TTRS TC, renamed the Maria Grey Training College, 1880s)
19. Coram Street, Bloomsbury (EWJ head office)
20. Langham Place (The LP Circle)

Map 5.3: Sites where Gurney, her relatives, and her colleagues lived in central London



Original map (without numbers) from Bartholomew, J. (1899) *Pocket atlas and guide to London*, London: J. Walker



*Key to map 5.3:*

Gurney's homes

1. 8 Walpole Street, Chelsea (from 1879)
2. 7 Mandeville Place, Marylebone (from 1887)
3. 24 Kensington Court Mansions, Kensington (from 1891)
4. 69 Ennismore Gardens, Kensington (from 1901)

Gurney's relatives' homes

5. Essex Street, Strand (William Brodie G, from the 1810s)
6. 26 Abingdon Street, Westminster (Joseph G, by 1838)
7. Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn (Sir John G, 1840s)
8. 63 Gloucester Place, Marylebone (John Hampden G, from the 1850s - 1862)
9. 8 Kensington Palace Gardens, Kensington (Russell and Emelia Batten G, from 1852)
10. 24 Kensington Palace Gardens, Kensington (John Henry G, 1860s)
11. 3 Orme Square, Bayswater (Emelia Batten G, 1890s)
12. 17 Sheffield Gardens, Kensington (William G, 1890s)

Gurney's colleagues' homes

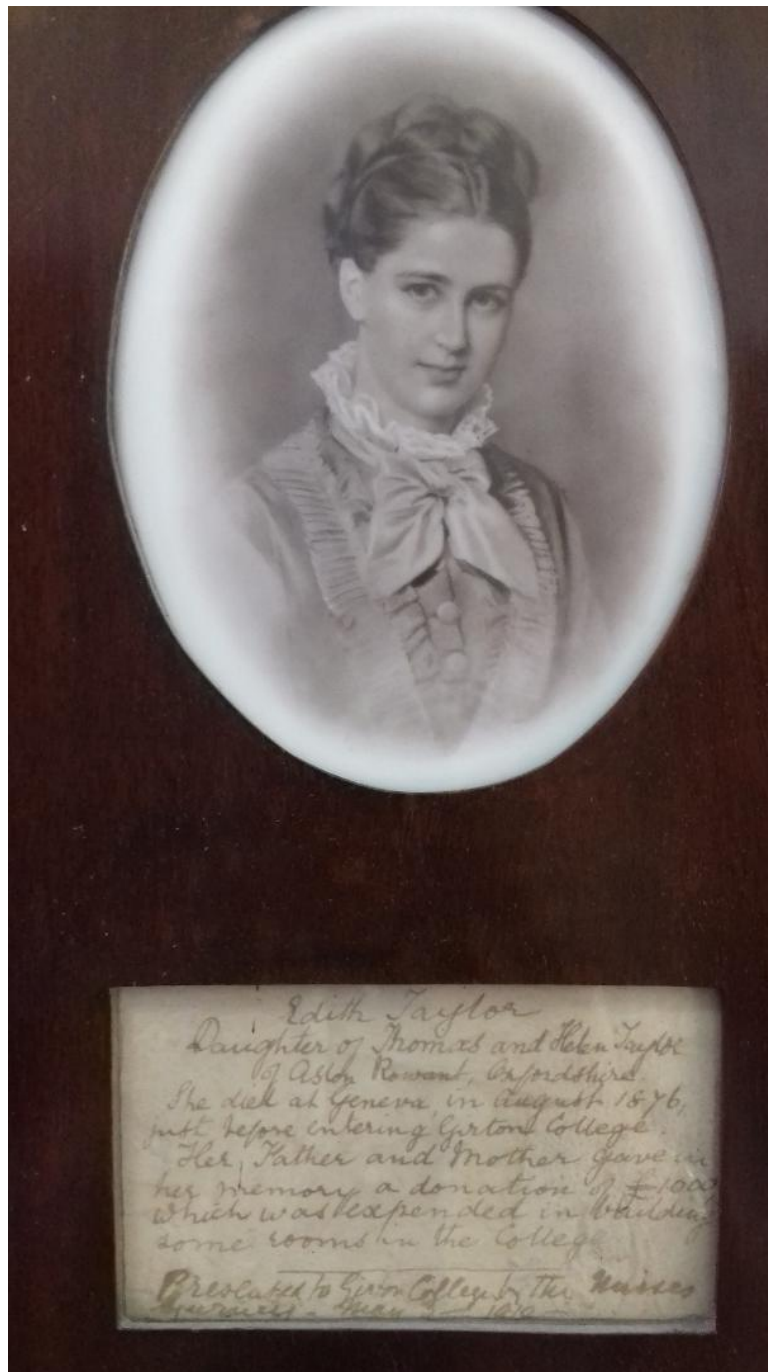
13. Leinster Square, Bayswater (Joshua and Emma Wilks Fitch)
14. 4 Kildaire Gardens, Bayswater (Joseph Payne)
15. 63 Kensington Gardens Square, Bayswater (Beata Doreck)
16. 44 Phillimore Gardens, Kensington (Charlotte Manning) (HQ: Kensington Society)
17. 2 Gower Street, Bloomsbury (Millicent Garrett Fawcett)
18. 18 Cadogan Place, Chelsea (Maria Shirreff Grey and Emily Shirreff)
19. 41 Stanhope Gardens, Kensington (MSG and ES)
20. 40 Dover Street, Mayfair (Henrietta Stanley)
21. 12 York Street, Marylebone (Emily Davies)
22. 6 Montagu Mansions, Marylebone (ED)
23. 13 Ennismore Gardens, Kensington (Thomas and Katherine Jex-Blake)

Illus. 5.1: *Photograph of E. Allen*



GCAR2/6/38 Papers relating to the estates of M. Gurney and A. Gurney

Illus. 5.2: Image of E. Taylor with accompanying inscription most likely written by Gurney and dated 1910



GC archive papers, with kind permission of the mistress and fellows of Girton College, Cambridge

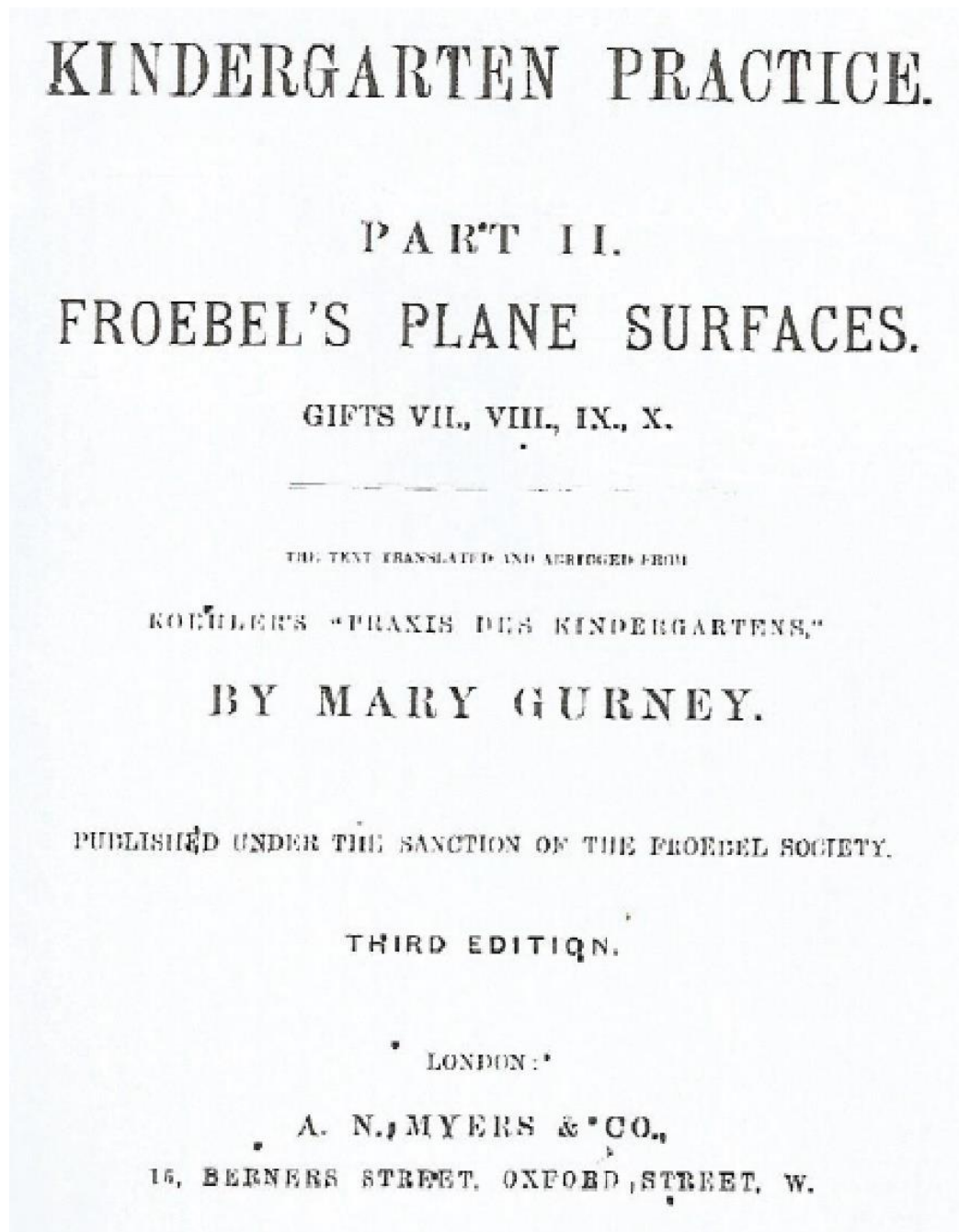
Fig. 5.1: Page two of Gurney's 1879 publication for kindergarten teachers



Gurney, M. (1879) *Kindergarten practice, part 2*, London: A. Myers, 2



Fig. 5.2: Page six of Gurney's 1879 publication for kindergarten teachers



Gurney, M. (1879) *Kindergarten practice, part 2*, London: A. Myers, 6

Fig. 5.3: First and last pages of Gurney's letter to M. Grey  
(29th November 1897)

NOV 29 1897  
69, ENNISMORE GARDENS, S.W.

I have been asked  
 to read a paper.  
 The audience has  
 been invited to the  
 Conference the  
 Representatives of all  
 present.  
 Yours affectionately  
 Mary Gurney

I am sending you  
 papers in case  
 you have not  
 got them. I told  
 you I would be  
 anxious you feel  
 on the question  
 of a Women's  
 University. I think  
 you will see that no other  
 field will state that.

GDS/A/2/4 Papers on the question of a university for women, 1897

## Chapter 6: Negotiating the GST's survival in late Victorian and Edwardian England

### Introduction

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Gurney, with members of her network, attempted to bridge some of the gap in the English provision of female secondary and tertiary education, a gap which during those 25 years the British state was unwilling to bridge. However, after the passing of the 1902 Education Act the state began to play a far larger role in the creation of a national system of secondary schooling. The previous work of Gurney and others for the GSC provided the Board of Education, which was established in 1899, and its new Local Education Authorities, which enacted educational legislation, with a precursor and an exemplar of a system of first grade high schools for girls leading to university study.

Gurney's work had been carried out in the shadow of male educational provision, despite the efforts of the ESC. Nevertheless, the SEC of 1894 to 1895 brought her work further into the educational spotlight. As a witness to the Bryce Commission she had the opportunity to promote the GSC's style of schooling and to demonstrate her experience as a leader of female education. However, judging by the arguments she voiced, she also feared that state provision, while finally answering her 1872 call for more female education, could in the new century ironically pose a threat to the secondary schools she had helped to create during the three decades since that request.

Therefore, in Edwardian England Gurney still felt she faced considerable challenges as an educationalist and the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that up until her death in 1917 she continued to struggle for the survival of schooling she envisaged as the most appropriate for middle-class girls. Indeed, the chapter shows that she died not knowing if the GST, into which the GSC changed by 1906, would survive its early twentieth-century financial crisis and continue administering its 25

remaining high schools according to the principles she had favoured since the 1870s. Without this chapter's understanding of that situation, again Gurney's career may be misinterpreted as one of unhindered progress. In contrast, the chapter indicates that she could have felt her career to be somewhat of a failure in the one area where she put most of her focus. This would help to explain why it was Girton College, not the Trust, which inherited her wealth.

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## The Secondary Education Commission

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### Preparation

By March 1893 Gurney was the only woman on a committee of eight, established by the GSC's Council, which was designed to consider 'in the interests of the Company' any parliamentary bills on secondary education.<sup>1</sup> The past, present, and future chairmen of the Council, Roundell, Stone, and Bousfield joined her in it, as did Bartley and Galton. In April 1893 that committee made two reports. Then, in December 1893 the Council sent a memorial to the British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, which indicated their concern for the future of the GSC. It stated that 'before any further legislation...due recognition should be given to all efficient agencies which already exist...[and] a Royal Commission should be appointed to enquire into the whole subject of Secondary education'.<sup>2</sup>

The SEC began in early 1894 under the leadership of the MP James Bryce who had already worked with members of Gurney's network for female as well as male

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<sup>1</sup> GDS3/3/19, (22<sup>nd</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup> April, and 27<sup>th</sup> April 1893) 36 - 37, 43, 51 - 2

<sup>2</sup> GDS1/3/2 Papers relating to the Bryce Commission, 1894 - 1895, and to Mr Gladstone; GDS10/1/7/2 Papers relating to the Bryce Commission, 1894 - 1895 (6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1893)



education. Bryce, with Russell and Emelia Gurney among others, was a founding member of GC. He also worked with Lyttelton and Fitch on the SIC, with Roundell for the Repeal of University Tests Act, and with Gurney in the WEU from its earliest days. In addition, Gurney, Fitch, and Bryce came together again in 1894 on GC's governing body, in 1897 to campaign against a women's university, and in the early 1900s to promote the work of the NSEA. Moreover, two other members of her network, Sadler and Cavendish, became assistant commissioners of the SEC. Cavendish served on the GSC's Council from 1872 to 1903 while Sadler worked with Gurney in the LSEUT in the 1890s and in the NSEA and VL in the 1900s. The other two female assistant commissioners were Bryant, the second NLCS headmistress, and Eleanor Sidgwick, the second principal of Newnham College in Cambridge. They were less directly connected to Gurney but were still part of her educational circle.<sup>3</sup>

In response to the creation of the SEC, by May 1894 the GSC's Council established another committee to consider 'the evidence to be tendered before' that commission. It did not choose Roundell or Bousfield to join Stone as the second of the Company's two witnesses. It chose Gurney. It also 'approved a scheme of evidence based chiefly upon' the second report of the earlier committee.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that the arguments Stone and Gurney made to the commissioners on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of May were carefully prepared. They were ready on those two days to defend their provision of an initial system of secondary education for girls and to demand the credit they felt was due to the Company.

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<sup>3</sup> BPP C7862 - I, XLIV - 1895, II, Royal Commission on Secondary Education minutes (9<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 168 - 177 and 240 - 254, with Appendix 3, [www.archive.org/](http://www.archive.org/) and [www.bit.ly/](http://www.bit.ly/) (last accessed Nov. 2020)

<sup>4</sup> GDS3/3/20, (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1894) 59

## Evidence

Nevertheless, they may have over-estimated the threat any recommendations for state provision by the SEC, with its connections to Gurney's network, would represent. Cavendish revealed her conflict of interest when she asked Stone the question: 'I think in one or two cases we have taken over existing schools, have we not'? By 'we' she meant the GSC, although she was speaking in her role of assistant commissioner.<sup>5</sup>

Despite any over-estimation, throughout their evidence Gurney and Stone felt it necessary to use assertiveness as a form of defence. Stone's reply to Cavendish's question was: 'Not since I have been Chairman [from 1877]'. Gurney immediately expanded his reply with the words: 'No, I do not think we have ever done that'. This indicated not only her sense of having greater knowledge about the Company's history than Stone and Cavendish possessed but also her determination to protect its reputation as an innovator worthy of imitation, even if it meant she had to contradict the GSC's chairman and its councillor now acting as a commissioner. At another point in the evidence Gurney again felt the need to expand on Stone's reply. She asked: 'May I be allowed to say a word about the origin of the company'. She then stressed that the formation of a shareholding company was the 'only' means of establishing the high schools in the circumstances of the 1870s.<sup>6</sup> Later, Stone emphasised that: 'Having no endowment, we cannot afford to take in gratuitous pupils'. Gurney further clarified that situation by adding: 'We have girls holding board school and other scholarships'.<sup>7</sup>

Gurney's desire to respond robustly when answering questions was also made clear in the discussion about the academic level of the GSC's high schools. She argued

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<sup>5</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 243

<sup>6</sup> BPP, SEC (9<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 176

<sup>7</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 246

that the Company's 'public' schools, with a leaving age of 18 and the preparation of pupils for 'higher certificates' and university entrance, were the equivalent of the NLCS and CLC. In other words they deserved to be seen as belonging to what the 1868 Taunton Report had classified as the first grade of secondary schools. She then asked if she could add to the evidence she had given about how many pupils had gone on to higher education. Therefore, when Gurney and Stone were recalled for a second time the proceedings began with her stating that 'I have made further inquiries' and 'a return' has been 'made up' detailing 'Statistics as to University Careers of Pupils of the Company's Schools'. Copies of the document were then presented to the commissioners. It stated that since the 1870s a total of 587 girls from 31 of the high schools had gone on to various university colleges in Cambridge, Oxford, London, and other parts of Great Britain. Also 271 of them had won 'external scholarships' which did not come from the Company. It also stated that 'This Return is an understatement, as in some Schools particulars have not been Registered'. Gurney re-emphasised this in her accompanying verbal explanation.<sup>8</sup>

Across the two days when they were witnesses together, Gurney and Stone intervened when the other was asked a question at an almost equal rate. Gurney used intervention on thirteen occasions and Stone on twelve. Given the evidence of their working relationship within the Company, begun in the early 1870s, this probably occurred more as a result of their keenness to argue a joint case than as a result of a rivalry between them. However, probably because he was the Company chairman and male, Stone was directly asked questions at double the rate that Gurney was asked. Consequently he spoke for much longer. Nevertheless, possibly because of that

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<sup>8</sup> BPP, SEC (9<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 176 - 177, (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 240 - 241 and appendix three, 543 - 545

disparity, when questions were not put directly to either of them Gurney initiated answers twice as many times as Stone. Her rate of unsolicited responses was twelve to his six.<sup>9</sup> Gurney demonstrated her command of the situation and of the Company's affairs despite this Victorian commission's tendency to defer to Stone. In 1997 Goodman discussed this tendency as an example of how females became powerless while simultaneously powerful.<sup>10</sup> The tendency is identifiable in Gurney's experience before Bryce but it is also possible to see her pushing against it before the Commission and in different meetings throughout her career, particularly those of the GST.

It was also strenuously argued that 'a central council like ours, has considerable advantage in reference to this matter of girls' higher education...over a local authority' and that this advantage was 'learnt by experience'. It was felt 'somewhat doubtful whether [a local authority's committee] could manage schools quite as well as we ourselves should manage them'.<sup>11</sup> The two justifications given for this self-belief were the 'very eminent members' which the Company's Council enjoyed 'by meeting in London' and the Company's 'complete system and scale of salaries of teachers'.<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that the first justification was partly made possible by improvement in Victorian travel. Cavendish's question that 'There was some hope, was there not, of filling... small schools...by train' and Stone's statement that 'we have children coming from a distance by train' also indicated the help this improvement gave to the Company's provision of schooling.<sup>13</sup> Gurney's bureaucratic skill was suggested by the second justification. She had created the GSC's complex system of differentiated salary grades, based on qualifications and experience, for its hundreds of teaching

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<sup>9</sup> BPP, SEC (9<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 168 - 177 and 240 - 254

<sup>10</sup> Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction', 294 - 295

<sup>11</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 249 and 252

<sup>12</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 248

<sup>13</sup> BPP, SEC (9<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 1894) 169 and 242

staff.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the Company's centralised management, it was argued that there was 'a tendency towards undue interference with the internal affairs' of schools by local boards. In conclusion only 'limited powers' at a local level were recommended.<sup>15</sup> The SEC was left in no doubt that by the 1890s the GSC saw itself as a foremost authority on the administration of a nation-wide system of first grade secondary school for girls.

Indeed, some of Gurney's last words to the Commission also provided a sense of this:

I think there is something to be said with regard to the prestige that we have now in the provision of girls' education. I think we are beginning to establish in England something of the feeling that there is in the great boys' public schools. We can say that we have done so...our schools have made a great difference in other girls' schools in the country. It is not for us to say whether other people could do the same, but we have had a remarkable effect upon the education of girls throughout this country.<sup>16</sup>

Stone supported her view on the effect of the GSC by arguing that it 'had done a very large amount...towards the provision of high schools in London' as well as in other places in England. He also highlighted that 'we have been the means of the same work being done by others' and 'they have taken all our methods very closely indeed...[and] frequently obtained their teachers and head mistresses from our schools...as we were first in the field'.<sup>17</sup>

However, the confidence expressed by Gurney and Stone in what the Company had created was accompanied by concern for its future role in English education. Their great fear was competition from new municipal secondary schools which were funded

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<sup>14</sup> See chapter 4.4.iv

<sup>15</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 248 and 250; GDS6/3/1/1 (13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1876 - 4<sup>th</sup> June 1877) 130 - 172; GDS6/3/1/2 (23<sup>rd</sup> May 1878 - 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1879) 65 - 115

<sup>16</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 253

<sup>17</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 242

by the tax-payer and able to charge lower fees. The prospect was seen as potentially 'ruinous' to their high schools and could even lead to them being 'destroyed'. In addition, a fear was expressed that there would be a 'drawing down' of girls' education 'for the sake of cheapness'.<sup>18</sup> In other words, parents would use cheaper municipal schools because they imagined them as equally efficient at educating girls as the Company's high schools despite those municipal schools' leaving ages of sixteen and fourteen and consequent lack of preparation for university entrance. Indeed, it was claimed that the Company's schools had 'a tendency to improve the girls from less cultivated homes'. Therefore, Stone felt that it was a 'good English plan' to leave first grade secondary education in the hands of 'purely voluntary associations'. This plan chimed with Gurney's earlier emphatic claim that 'there is a distinct difference between what is called [by Taunton] a second and third grade school and what we call our high school'.<sup>19</sup>

Neither Gurney nor Stone seemed to envisage or want the lessening of divisions based on class which existed within English secondary education, although they argued against divisions based on gender. The extent of control the state would eventually exercise over that education was also beyond their vision and desire. They upheld the tradition exercised until the twentieth century that English secondary education, whether for boys or girls and especially in its first grade schools, was run without state interference. Nevertheless, Gurney and Stone did have a sense of how they and others within the GSC's bureaucracy had acted as exemplars and ushers, if not forerunners, to the next century's educational ministers and civil servants. They had attempted to fill some of the deficiency in the provision of female secondary

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<sup>18</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 246 - 247, 253

<sup>19</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 252 - 253 and 245

education which the state was disinclined to rectify in the nineteenth century. Also, on those two days in May 1894 when they were seated before the Bryce Commission they sought recognition for the GSC's system of schooling as a guide and as a fore-shadow, if not a precursor, of a future state system of secondary schooling.

iii

### Summary

Apart from being invited to give verbal evidence, in April 1894 the GSC was invited by the SEC to summarise in writing its views on a future 'Organisation' of secondary education in England, 'with particular regard to the place (if any) which the Company would wish to occupy...[how it] might be injuriously affected...and the safeguards, which...might fairly be provided in their interests'.<sup>20</sup> Again, it is possible to see from these words that Gurney had less to fear from the Commission than she imagined.

The Company did not send a written reply until July 1894, after Gurney and Stone had appeared as witnesses. It began by quoting parts of the April request as if to justify its contents, although it resembled in assertive tone the verbal evidence already supplied. The GSC accepted that while 'a considerable proportion of the first grade Girl's Schools required in the country are now supplied...there is still much need for the establishment of additional second grade Schools for girls...[although they] might...incidentally injure existing High Schools'. Therefore, they again argued that the 'class of pupils' be held in view when the curricula and the leaving ages of future secondary schools were decided, so there could be no substitution by parents of a first grade education with a second grade one. This acceptance and qualification need to be put into a wider context. In 1873 Gurney and Payne were keen to establish in Chelsea

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<sup>20</sup> GDS10/1/7/2, (25<sup>th</sup> July 1894)

at least two of the three types of secondary school promulgated by the Taunton Report. However, possibly for economic reasons this nascent policy was not pursued and the GSC kept to establishing first grade schools with only one exception.<sup>21</sup> In 1875 it created in the Clapham area of London what was called a middle school rather than a high school, with a lower leaving age and lower fees. It survived until 1904. Interestingly, this middle school did not stop the creation of a GSC high school in the same area in 1882, which survived until 1938.<sup>22</sup> The plan of Gurney and Payne may or may not have been vindicated by these events but the dilemma they faced in the 1870s about separate grades of schools did not go away. It came back to worry the Company in the 1890s.

The July reply also confidently argued for grants to the high schools in return for an unspecified number of free places for scholars from second grade or elementary schools. In addition, it argued for local authority scholarships for ‘promising pupils’ in their high schools and all other secondary schools as well as leaving scholarships for pupils in first grade schools going on to university. One of the most assertive of the proposals put forward in writing was the idea that the state should also support existing secondary schools with a grant, irrespective of how many free places they offered and with only their existing governing bodies to run them. Another and more unusual proposal was to suggest that new state secondary schools be managed by existing schools. Lastly, Gurney and the Council called for ‘equitable terms’ if a state take-over of an established school should occur, possibly revealing in this idea their deepest fear.

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<sup>21</sup> GDS3/3/1 (4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1873, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1873, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873) 151 - 169

<sup>22</sup> Sondheimer and Bodington, *The GPDST 1872 - 1972*, 29



Gurney and the Company had to wait for over five years for the start of what the April request called the state's 'Organisation' of secondary education. They may have welcomed that pace of change. Eventually, in 1899 the start came in the form of a new unifying central authority, as recommended by Bryce, known as the Board of Education and in the form of legislation on secondary schooling three years later. Throughout the waiting time they remained alert. For example, in 1899 Gurney with the new Council chairman, Bousfield, was on another GSC committee designed 'to watch legislation on Secondary Education and any action taken thereon'.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Gurney contributed to a book of essays on the subject which was published in the same year. The impetus for it came from a committee formed in November 1898 'for the purpose of placing before the country the claims of Secondary Education to national aid and recognition'. It consisted of seven men and two women, one of whom was the GSC's headmistress, Florence Gadesden. The committee asked that 'the State should at length assume the responsibility of supervising the supply' of that education provided by 'private enterprise' but no more than this. The essays were by 'well-known educationists' and it was claimed that most of them had already been published in the press. Apart from Gurney, only five of the other 39 authors involved were women. Bryce and Fitch were also contributors to the book.<sup>24</sup>

The main message of her contribution was to 'supplement, not supplant'. She argued, as she had in 1895, that 'the value' of existing girls' first grade schools needed to be utilised and while they could be improved, through for example more scholarships to universities at their disposal, the aim of reform should not be 'to displace them'. Instead, 'every particle of tradition which has grown up around them

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<sup>23</sup> GDS3/3/25 (22<sup>nd</sup> March 1899) 39

<sup>24</sup> Scott, R. (1899) (ed.), *What is secondary education? And other short essays*, London: Rivingtons, preface, v - vii and xii - xv

should be preserved'. Freedom, variety, and elasticity were seen as appropriate for English education and 'rigid uniformity' was seen as dangerous. It seems that despite her tendency to impose uniformity on the Company schools, in a contradictory but understandable manner Gurney did not wish for it to be imposed by a different authority. Also, over the issue of scholarships for girls in the elementary schools to attend the high schools, she kept to the belief that scholarships for them should 'not be too numerous' and restricted to the 'clever' among them. Finally, she approved the creation of 'a strong central authority' upon which 'women ought to be represented' but its duties should be only the 'planning out and inspection of work in Girls' Schools' based 'on educational experience' and not the creation of 'a new system' of such schools.<sup>25</sup> As before, underlying these arguments were Gurney's sensibilities about class and gender divisions. While she was liberal in seeking to reduce discrimination against women and girls, she did not abandon the notion that class justified limits on academic provision, particularly when it was reinforced by financial considerations. This more conservative attitude underpinned her negotiations with the new Board and its LEAs about free places for elementary school scholars until her death. Overall, some of Gurney's and Stone's fears were partly realised over the next two decades but so too were some of their ideas on how the GSC and its schools could survive in a changed educational landscape. The Bryce Commission was only the beginning of Gurney's negotiations for that survival.

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## Consolidation of power within the GST

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<sup>25</sup> Gurney, M. 'The interest of girls in secondary education', Scott, *What is secondary education?* 104 - 110

### A row' in the Council <sup>26</sup>

As a key member of the GSC in the 1890s and 1900s Gurney also maintained control over the daily affairs of the Company, affairs which were not directly connected to the wider question of how the state would affect the future of English education. As it had during its initial phase in the 1870s and 1880s, this leadership continued to present her with challenges. Indeed, as she became more powerful and the high schools expanded in number and size, so tensions grew. Nevertheless, with the support of her network, she embraced greater responsibilities and further developed her distinctive presence and voice in the Council and in its five standing committees. With the exception of the Finance Committee, from which she resigned sometime between 1914 and 1916, she never retired from them.

However, for a short period in late 1896 and early 1897, Gurney's existing and future position within the Company came under threat, as it had done in 1877. In December 1896 Galton put forward a 'confidential' memorandum about reorganisation of the Council's business accompanied by proposed resolutions. The proposal with the most implications for Gurney's work sought to abolish the Education Committee and the two bodies which reported to it: the Teachers Committee and the Examinations Committee. Gurney had been a member of these three since their inception and deputy chairman of the first from 1889. Instead Galton suggested a Committee of Management and Discipline and a Committee of Studies and Examinations.<sup>27</sup> He argued that from 1887, when the Education Committee began to consist of all councillors who wished to be its members, it was often felt that its recommendations did not need the Council's approval because they had already been

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<sup>26</sup> GDS3/2/2 Papers relating to a reorganisation of the Council's business, handwritten inscription on the front cover of a printed memorandum containing proposed resolutions (16<sup>th</sup> December 1896)

<sup>27</sup> GDS3/2/2, memorandum, 10

discussed by the same group of people. He complained that ‘the Council has become practically mainly a machine to register the conclusions of the Education Committee’. He also criticised the ‘tendency for the Education Committee to usurp work’ from other committees because it was ‘coextensive with the Council’ and ‘it practically absorbs a share of what should properly be the work of the Council’.<sup>28</sup> It is easy to see that he objected to the lack of a vertical hierarchy of scrutiny within some of the Company’s governance and how his scheme to rectify this situation would eliminate some of Gurney’s networked power.

To support his view Galton pointed to the ‘the old members feeling no doubt that their knowledge and devotion...entitled them to carry on the traditions in which they had grown up’. Presumably he included himself in this call to rein in any sense of entitlement based on longevity of service. Although not a Company founder, he was a Council member from late 1872 as well as a member and chairman of the WEU’s Central Committee during its existence in the 1870s.<sup>29</sup> As further justification for his view, he cited Stone’s chairmanship of the Education Committee of ‘about twenty years’, highlighted that Gurney was the last of the original ‘female directors’ to remain on the Council, and saw Bousfield’s recent appointment as chairman of the Council as an ‘opportunity’ for alterations in the GSC’s structure and procedures.<sup>30</sup>

Bousfield’s January 1897 response was equally assertive. He countered by stating that the work of the Education Committee was ‘the most important...work of the Company...serving upon it... an absolutely requisite qualification for useful service...there are many advantages in the Education Committee retaining its present

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<sup>28</sup> GDS3/2/2, memorandum, 7 - 9

<sup>29</sup> *Morning Post* (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1871) 2; *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873), (15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1877), (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1879) 32, 20, 16 respectively

<sup>30</sup> GDS3/2/2, memorandum, 1, 4 - 5

position...and in being composed of all members of Council'. Moreover, 'limited periods of service would constantly deprive the Committees of their most useful and skilled members'.<sup>31</sup> An anonymous response was angrier: 'We must all be very much obliged to Mr D. for telling us of our faults. They may have been many - but they have been involuntary faults...The work has been heavy...I must most emphatically say that I do not...[support being] used in turn...I think we want centralizing not decentralization'.<sup>32</sup> Gurney may have written this. Her future position within the GSC was threatened by Galton's proposals, not just her present position. As the Education Committee's deputy chairman she was in a strong place to become its chairman when the position became vacant and Stone's twenty-year tenure made that vacancy imminent. Indeed, she became its chairman in May 1897. Also, she was not against using angry anonymity, she had used it in the 1870s when writing to the press.

In February 1897 Roundell also opposed Galton's plans and the affair ended with the Council voting to reject them soon afterwards.<sup>33</sup> Of course, Galton may never have intended to undermine Gurney's career through reform of the Company's bureaucracy. Apart from working together in the WEU's Central Committee throughout the 1870s and the GSC's Council continuously from 1872, they worked closely together in the Council's Sites and Building Committee from the late 1870s and especially after he became its chairman in 1883. Interestingly, he resigned from that post in 1897, although he stayed a member of that committee and of the Council until his death in 1899. He also worked with Gurney for the PHC, joining its Council and Executive Committee at the same time as she did in 1888. In addition, they shared membership of the Royal Drawing Society. It is difficult to tell if their long working

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<sup>31</sup> GDS3/2/3, printed memorandum by the chairman of the Council (24<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1897) 1 - 3

<sup>32</sup> GDS3/2/5, handwritten, unsigned, and undated note about reorganisation

<sup>33</sup> GDS3/2/4 and 6, printed resolutions opposing reorganisation (4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1897)

relationship was damaged in its last two years by ‘the row’. Nevertheless, in contrast to Galton’s resignation as a committee chairman, Gurney took on that position in the three committees he wished to abolish. Even if she had been elected to the two new ones he proposed, her further development of power would probably have been more difficult in them than in the established three, especially as the Council deferred to the Education Committee, according to Galton, and the Teachers and Examinations Committees were answerable to it.

ii

#### Business as usual

The consolidation of Gurney’s power within the Trust was assisted by her continuing high rate of attendance at its Council’s meetings from the 1890s to the 1910s. For example, between 1893 and 1916 she was present at 100% of the Council’s meetings in ten of those years and for most of the rest she was only absent once. In contrast, in 1889 Grey resigned from the Council and snapshots of 1885 and 1891 reveal that none of the other remaining founders exceeded Gurney’s attendance rates in those two years. However, such comparisons were not possible after 1903 as Gurney was the only one of the founding councillors still attending Council meetings. After 1904 this was also true in the case of AGMs and EGMs. More remarkably, unlike some of the other founders, her presence did not dip as she aged. 1915 was one of the years when she was present at all of the Council’s meetings.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, Gurney’s attendance rate at Trust committee meetings, which in some cases were held up to three times a month, continued to be similarly high and exceeded the rates of other chairmen and other members. For example, between July 1902 and

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<sup>34</sup> GDS3/3/15 - 43 (Jan. 1889 - Dec. 1917); GDS4/1/1 - 2 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1872 - March 1920)

July 1916 she was present at 232 or 94% of the 247 Education Committee meetings. Of the 486 Teachers Committee meetings held between October 1879 and July 1916, Gurney was present at 445 of them and that 92% attendance rate included a 100% presence across nine consecutive years from 1897 to 1906. With regard to the Examinations and Studies Committee meetings held between October 1884 and May 1916, she was present at 116 of its 121. None of the other members equalled this 96% rate in the years they were part of that body. In addition, she was present continuously between October 1884 and January 1890 as well as between January 1898 and May 1916.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Gurney attended 197 of the 214 Finance Committee meetings held between March 1903 and March 1914. Only Northcote, the chairman who ran that committee after 1903, very nearly equalled her 92% rate. Lastly, between December 1898 and June 1910 there were 119 meetings of the Sites and Building Committee. Gurney attended 110 of them. In contrast to this other 92% presence, in the same period its chairman 'Mr Morrish' was present at 55% of them, although the chairman of the Council, Bousfield, did attend 81%. Also, between July 1910 and July 1916 Gurney attended 83% of its 54 meetings while Laurie Magnus, that committee's next chairman, was present at 74%.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the consolidation of Gurney's power was assisted by her promotion within three of the Council's standing committees. Although during the first decade of her GST work she was only able to act as chairman of the Education Committee

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<sup>35</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (29<sup>th</sup> July 1902 - 8<sup>th</sup> April 1908) 1 - 302; GDS6/3/1/4 (13<sup>th</sup> May 1908 - 4<sup>th</sup> March 1914) 1 - 302; GDS6/3/1/5 (18<sup>th</sup> March 1914 - 20<sup>th</sup> June 1917) 1 - 302; GDS6/7/1 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1879 - 21<sup>st</sup> July 1886); GDS6/7/2 (6<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1886 - 13<sup>th</sup> March 1895) 1 - 301; GDS6/7/3 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1895 - 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1907) 1 - 302; GDS6/7/4 (11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1907 - 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1917) 1 - 301; GDS6/6/1 (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1884 - 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1921) 1 - 302

<sup>36</sup> GDS6/4/2 - 6 (11<sup>th</sup> March 1903 - 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1913); GDS6/4/7 (6<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1913 - 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1919) 1 - 412 ; GDS6/5/1/3 (14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1898 - 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1910) 1 - 329; GDS6/5/1/4 (20<sup>th</sup> July 1910 - 11<sup>th</sup> July 1918) 1 - 329; for a comparative overview of Gurney's and other councillors' attendance rates at meetings of GST governing bodies from 1872 to 1916 see table 6.1 at the end of this chapter

once in July 1880, she became its permanent deputy chairman in 1890 and its permanent chairman from May 1897 until April 1913. Those sixteen years can be classified as the peak of her career. Bousfield and Northcote, chairmen of the Council, worked under her within this dominant body which Galton had criticised as too powerful. It can be argued that during those years she was the *de facto* CEO of the Trust, rather than the *de jure* chairmen of the Council. Then instead, in May 1913 she was elected permanent chairman of the Teachers Committee, having already served as its chairman intermittently from March 1892 to July 1893, regularly from December 1896 to March 1901, and continuously within that time from May 1899 to February 1900. Gurney also began to work as permanent chairman of the Examination and Studies Committee from May 1911. When she died in 1917 she was still a member of these three committees, having remained permanent chairman of the latter two until February and May 1916 respectively and having stood in as chairman of the Education Committee once more in January 1916.<sup>37</sup>

Gurney's permanent promotions stand in contrast to her other earlier promotions of a temporary nature, a nature which may have partly reflected their more public character. She was vice-chairman of the Council during the high schools' summer vacations between 1878 and 1881. She also chaired one 1891 Council meeting and one EGM in 1901. Nevertheless, together, all these permanent and temporary posts demonstrated that Gurney not only founded the Company but also sustained it and its system of schools over the next 45 years from positions of increasing power. Therefore, as a woman of the Victorian and Edwardian periods she provided herself

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<sup>37</sup> GDS3/3/15 (3<sup>rd</sup> April 1889) 38; GDS3/3/18 (16<sup>th</sup> March 1892) 33; GDS3/3/20 (14<sup>th</sup> April 1894) 44; GDS3/3/21 (3<sup>rd</sup> April 1895) 41; GDS3/3/22 (29<sup>th</sup> April 1896) 39; GDS3/3/23 (12<sup>th</sup> May 1897) 56; GDS6/3/1/2 (28<sup>th</sup> July 1880) 202; GDS6/3/1/3; GDS6/3/1/4 (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1913); GDS6/3/1/5 (26<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1916); GDS6/7/1 - 4; GDS6/7/4 (21<sup>st</sup> May 1913), (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1916); GDS6/6/1 (24<sup>th</sup> May 1911), (17<sup>th</sup> May 1916)



with an unusual career, one in which she climbed the height of a corporate ladder. It could be argued that her appointment as a vice-president of the Company in 1907 detracted from the business aspect of her work, given how little policy-making and administration some of the other vice-presidents, such as Grey and Cavendish, completed for the Trust.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, such was Gurney's sense of her own centrality to the running of the Trust's schools and such was her desire to control the spread of information about them, that in the 1890s and later she did not relinquish to others her pattern of routine work conducted in the Council's standing committees. This lack of delegation occurred despite her promotions and the expansion of that work as the number of schools and teaching staff grew. Her only concession to these developments was to go on accepting assistance from close colleagues to complete the pattern. The very cursory reference in the Council minutes of 1909 to Gurney's completion of her annual spring, summer, and autumn tasks illustrated how her routine work, so vital to the GST's centralised governance, was not just accepted but expected of her.<sup>39</sup>

Every spring until the 1910s she continued in the Education Committee to request, collate, and summarise for the Council the annual reports of the headmistresses on their schools. They had a formalised and detailed structure, established from at least the late 1870s when she began leading this task of review and presentation. By the 1890s and the new century, depending on the year in question, there were up to 35 reports sent to London. After 1908 some of this annual responsibility was reduced by

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<sup>38</sup> GDS3/3/4 (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1878); GDS3/3/5 (30<sup>th</sup> July 1879) 84; GDS3/3/6 (21<sup>st</sup> July 1880) 73; GDS3/3/7 (20<sup>th</sup> July 1881); GDS3/3/17 (25<sup>th</sup> March 1891); GDS4/1/1 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1901); GDS4/1/2 (27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1907)

<sup>39</sup> GDS3/3/35 (28<sup>th</sup> April 1909) 44; other references for Gurney's completion of these annual tasks before the 1900s are provided in chapter 4.4.iv - vii

the assistance Gurney received from Maud Grenfell, the vice-chairman of the Education Committee.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Gurney's continuing capacity for control through censorship was suggested in March 1912 when she raised points from the headmistresses' spring reports for discussion by the Education Committee which would not appear in the printed summary of them.<sup>41</sup>

Also, every late spring and summer in the Examinations and Studies Committee she continued, after some earlier consultation with the headmistresses, to choose the external examination papers the high schools would use at all levels in the following year.<sup>42</sup> In addition, every autumn she continued to make 'confidential' comparative 'analysis' of the multitude of examination results of the candidates in every subject within and across the schools. By 1904 and 1905 this analysis was printed for 'the Council only' to read in the form of summary 'Remarks' which were 'drawn up by Miss Gurney in concert with Mr Eve and Lady Digby'. The burden of this work may have been diminished by these councillors' assistance but in October 1913 only Gurney's name appeared on a typed version of the 'Remarks', suggesting her continuing importance to this process.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, she continued to choose the parts of the external examination boards' reports which would be sent in a circular to the headmistresses and their local committees, a task she began in the late 1870s. In October 1907 and in later years it was made clear that this censored circular continued to be 'drafted by Miss Gurney'.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, in November 1901 a reprimand was issued

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<sup>40</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (28<sup>th</sup> April 1909) 39, (13<sup>th</sup> April 1910), (16<sup>th</sup> May 1911) 141; GDS6/3/1/5 (14<sup>th</sup> April 1915)

<sup>41</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1912)

<sup>42</sup> For example GDS6/6/1 (10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1909), (21<sup>st</sup> May 1913), (3<sup>rd</sup> June 1914), (1<sup>st</sup> July 1914), (25<sup>th</sup> March 1915) 199, (16<sup>th</sup> June 1915) 204, (17<sup>th</sup> May 1916) 228

<sup>43</sup> For example GDS6/6/1 (17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1900), (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1902), (12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1903), (26<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1904) 147, (13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1905) 149, (28<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1908) 155, (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1909), (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1913) 174, (1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1915) 210

<sup>44</sup> For example GDS6/3/1/4 (10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1909) 62, (16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1910), (25<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1911) 158; GDS6/3/1/5 (3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1915) 33; GDS6/6/1(30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1907) 153

to the headmistress of Newcastle High School for directly communicating with an examination board instead of through the Council and its committees in London and in 1911 the headmistresses were ordered ‘not to show to any of the staff’ the reports on the art teaching.<sup>45</sup> Instead, for many decades Gurney controlled the information headmistresses and their staff received from examination boards.

Furthermore, with the support of only a few other councillors in the Teachers Committee, in late autumn every year until the 1910s Gurney continued in ‘special’ meetings to resettle the classification of the schools’ teaching staff and thereby decide their salaries for the coming twelve months. The process was based on her original scheme of classification created in the late 1870s and on the annual November report about each assistant mistress made by their headmistress. This report differed from the more general spring report they made about their schools. By November 1896, when only Gurney and Bousfield undertook this evaluation, 380 staff required it. In some years it took three or four meetings to complete this review, especially if reports were returned as inadequate or appeals were made against decisions as occurred in 1901 and 1904. Indeed, such was the scale of this annual task by the new century that its procedure was altered. From November 1900 only changes in classification and therefore in salary were considered and recommended in the ‘special’ meetings.<sup>46</sup>

Apart from these tasks always completed at particular times in the academic year, at all times of the year Gurney continued to lead the appointment of the headmistresses. She was helped in this by her tendency to rely on a relatively closed

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<sup>45</sup> GDS6/6/1 (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1901); GDS17/4/3 (31<sup>st</sup> May 1911)

<sup>46</sup> Descriptions of Gurney’s classification and settlement of salaries can be found in the November and December entries from 1896 to 1916 of GDS6/7/2 - 4; GDS6/7/3 (26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1896) 46 - 59, (14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1900) 162, (26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1901), (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1901), (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1904); other references for Gurney’s completion of this annual task before 1896 are provided in chapter 4.4.iv

group of trusted headmistresses who were part of her network. Therefore, she supervised the appointment of 136 headmistresses between 1872 and 1917 but 31 of those women, that is nearly a quarter or 23% of them, had already served in that role in another Trust school at least once and some were employed in that role several times.<sup>47</sup> After 1902 she also regularly conducted interviews with a headmistress and HMIs, together in the Trust's head office, after the Board of Education's inspection of a school.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, she continued to oversee the appointment of assistant teachers and acceptance of their resignations by headmistresses as well as continue to determine and monitor the schools' curricula, syllabi, pedagogy, and examinations. In addition, she continued to oversee the schools' libraries and the award of the GST's few leaving scholarships to universities as well as the new intake of LEA scholarship pupils from elementary schools. Furthermore, the schools' infrastructure, expenditure, and local committees remained under her supervision, along with the development of teacher training schemes and applications for grants from outside bodies.<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, when considering Gurney's central role in the bureaucracy of the GST, it is possible to trace an increase in the volume and diversity of matters dealt with by the Examinations and Studies Committee and by the Teachers Committee when Gurney became their permanent chairman between 1911 and 1916 and ended her chairmanship of the Education Committee in 1913. From 1904 to 1912 the Examinations and Studies Committee met between three times a year and not at all,

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<sup>47</sup> These figures on Gurney's use of sponsored mobility were compiled using the lists of past headmistresses and their posts in Kamm, *Indicative past*, appendix II

<sup>48</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (6<sup>th</sup> July 1908), (29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1909), (4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1910) 81, (22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1911), (3<sup>rd</sup> March 1911) 135, (17<sup>th</sup> May 1911), (20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1911), (11<sup>th</sup> March 1912), (17<sup>th</sup> May 1912), (13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1912), (14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1913), (7<sup>th</sup> July 1913), (14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1913), (2<sup>nd</sup> March 1914)

<sup>49</sup> References for Gurney's earlier work in these areas are also provided in chapter 4.4.ii - vii and 4.5; references for her later and particularly challenging work in these areas are also in 6.2.iii, 6.3, and 6.4 of this chapter

although it had met eight times in 1890 and the same in 1898. Between 1913 and 1917 the frequency of its meetings revived, in particular it met six times in 1914 and the same in 1915 when Gurney was its chairman. However, between 1918 and 1921 it reverted to only one meeting a year. Also, it dealt with 34 items of business between 1908 and 1912, then 66 items between 1913 and 1917, but only ten items between 1918 and 1921. Some of this increased business was transferred from the Education Committee's body of work. For example, in 1911 Gurney and the Examinations and Studies Committee discussed the Headmistresses' spring reports, a paper was then 'prepared [and signed] by Miss Gurney' on behalf of that committee for circulation to the headmistresses. That transfer was partly understandable given that the reports had highlighted difficulties with external examinations. Less understandable was the committee's 1913 discussion of the Board of Education's criticisms of Domestic Science lessons, again usually dealt with by the Education Committee.<sup>50</sup> A similar change in the business of the Teachers Committee occurred. In 1913 Gurney and that committee dealt with matters raised by the Board of Education, with curricula and syllabi, with boarding houses, and the closure of Dulwich High School, none of which formed part of its previous business as that was mostly concerned with the employment of the assistant mistresses.<sup>51</sup> The most plausible explanation for these patterns of change was the parallel changes in Gurney's role as chairman within three of the Council's committees between 1911 and 1916.

Overall, it seems that Gurney was allowed to exercise considerable control over much of the GST's policy-making and administration wherever she operated within its bureaucracy. For decades she acted as a catalyst and a lynchpin around which the

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<sup>50</sup> GDS6/6/1(29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1884 - 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1921); GDS6/6/1 (24<sup>th</sup> May and 28<sup>th</sup> June 1911) 138, (21<sup>st</sup> May 1913)

<sup>51</sup> GDS6/7/4 (29<sup>th</sup> Jan., 12<sup>th</sup> March, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1913)

Trust's structure grew, altered, and functioned. Indeed, at times she also made use of 69 Ennismore Gardens as a meeting place for its councillors, although the GST did not need an alternative space in London, unlike CLC and GC.<sup>52</sup>

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### Unusual business

From the 1890s to the 1910s Gurney also continued in the committees to deal with issues that were not routine. Again, some of this work concerned unexpected problems with the teaching staff. In 1892 Gurney proposed that the headmistress of Clapton High School resign. 'Miss Pearse', who had been in that position since the school's opening as Hackney High School in 1875 and who had already been called before the Council in 1880, did so. Nevertheless, the school still failed and it was closed in 1899. In April 1906 Gurney had to arrange the retirement of 'Miss Spencer', an assistant mistress, due to her mental health. Moreover, 'Miss Furness', headmistress of Dulwich High School, avoided possible dismissal 'privately' by Gurney in 1912 through the school's transfer to the Church Schools' Company.<sup>53</sup> However, not all staff problems led to the end of a GST career. Instead, Gurney called headmistresses to London in an attempt to resolve particular issues, such as the weak teaching or disappointing examination results of individual assistant mistresses. However, sometimes the discussions were more general. For instance, in December 1905 'Miss A. Silcox' was left in no doubt that the average standard of all the academic work of her East Liverpool school was 'distinctly below' that of the other high schools.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (10<sup>th</sup> May 1905) 152; GDS6/3/1/4 (10<sup>th</sup> July 1912), (21<sup>st</sup> May 1913); GDS6/7/4 (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1912) 144, (18<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914); GDS6/4/6 - 7 (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1912), (21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1913), (15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1913), (6<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914)

<sup>53</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (28<sup>th</sup> July 1880); GDS3/3/18 (16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April 1892) 34 and 41; GDS6/3/1/3 (4<sup>th</sup> April 1906); GDS6/3/1/4 (12<sup>th</sup> June 1912) 207 - 208

<sup>54</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1903) 94, (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1904), (13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1905); GDS6/3/1/4 (15<sup>th</sup> May 1912) 200, (12<sup>th</sup> June 1912) 207

In contrast to this apparently unchallenged, albeit flexible, handling of staff, between October 1902 and July 1903 Gurney experienced considerable difficulty with a group of mistresses at Liverpool High School. In the end, this crisis also led to the curtailment of another long-serving headmistress's GST career. By that October rumours surrounding the dismissal of two assistant mistresses and the resignation of three others had begun, despite the Council upholding and accepting these changes. Therefore, two of those who resigned were interviewed by Gurney and the Education Committee in London. So too was 'Miss Cannings', the headmistress, who had been in the Liverpool post for nearly ten years and for eight years before that had been the first headmistress of the Company's high school in Shrewsbury. Into the situation were added a memorial to the Council from nearly 30 parents and a letter from the oldest pupils who voiced criticisms of the councillors' actions and of the headmistress. In a written reply the Council refused to make public their reasons for upholding the dismissals, stating that 'it would be against the Councils [sic] practice, and...a mischievous precedent' to do so and adding that the rumours were unfounded.<sup>55</sup>

It was also decided by Gurney and the Committee that a 'strong assistant and a confidential advisor' should be allocated to the headmistress from among the Company's teaching staff outside of the school. Isabel Rhys was chosen for this role and by 1903 she was reporting back to London as well as offering advice. Lastly, Cannings was told to invite 'friends among the parents' to attend a forthcoming December 1902 meeting in Liverpool. Despite this, at that meeting nearly 70 parents agreed to a written resolution regretting the tone of the Council's reply, pointing out that five assistants had resigned by then, and predicting that the refusal 'will assuredly

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<sup>55</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1902 - 4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1902) 7 - 20

prove detrimental to the interests of the Company's school in the District'. Nevertheless, the Council did receive letters from other parents who dissented from the resolution and the local committee of the school argued that 'there was no ground for the rumours' surrounding the dismissals and resignations. The Council, the Committee, and Gurney then stood their ground. They resolved to send a response to the resolution 'expressing regret that the tone of the Council's reply was objected to but adhering to their position'.<sup>56</sup>

However, although they had publicly supported Cannings's actions, and in the process protected their own centralised power, by February 1903 Gurney and other councillors were advising the headmistress to take a term's 'rest' in the near future. Intriguingly, they also recommended that her study should be changed 'at once' to a room where the door could be closed. In response, Cannings refused to take the leave offered and argued in letters that it would be 'fatal' to the school. So, in March a councillor was sent to inspect the school and another London interview with the headmistress was planned for the end of that month. Then, 'having received serious reports as to Miss Canning's [sic] mental condition', the Council changed its approach. She was ordered to take the leave and not return during that period. When she broke the second instruction it was resolved in April 1903 that it was 'against' the schools' interests for her to continue as headmistress and Rhys was instructed to act as her replacement. Then in July, after Cannings's resignation and after Gurney had interviewed a staff representative from the Liverpool school, Rhys was officially appointed headmistress. During that month the ex-headmistress was keen for another interview with the Council and it too was planned. It is not clear how many meetings

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<sup>56</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1902 - 10<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1902) 18 - 24



with her took place after the first one in late 1902. What is clear is that she engaged solicitors to ask for the omission of all reference to overstrain in the testimonial given to her, a request the Trust declined in September 1903.<sup>57</sup>

This affair demonstrated how Gurney and other councillors in London had to negotiate difficult and conflicting demands from their distant schools. In particular it illustrated, as did the 1877 controversy which began in Clapham High School, how the centralised control of those schools created a tension that could damage as well as create Gurney's power. It also revealed the strain that could be felt by the GSC's headmistresses and assistant mistresses. Lastly, it made clear the capacity of Gurney and other councillors to resist public pressure, while at the same time seeking a solution that served a school's survival. The anonymous author of the 1897 claim that the 'work has been heavy' may have felt further justified by the events at Liverpool High School during 1902 and 1903.

Fortunately for Gurney the crisis in Liverpool was unusual, if not unique. For instance, in 1914 she seems to have had less difficulty overcoming criticisms of Streatham Hill and Brixton High School made by the LCC. Its headmistress since 1898, Reta Oldham, was interviewed by Gurney and two other leading councillors and she was not required to end her career with the Trust, unlike Pearse, Spencer, and Cannings. Instead she continued for another nine years in her post.<sup>58</sup> Nor was Hastings required to leave her post after her 1901 refusal to allow a local government sanitary inspector into WHS to investigate a complaint of overcrowding in a classroom. This resulted in a public court case in the 1902 Surrey Quarter Sessions, where Gurney and the Council successfully chose to defend Hastings' action. The prosecution was

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<sup>57</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1903 - 8<sup>th</sup> July 1903) 37 - 60; GDS6/4/2 (23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1903)

<sup>58</sup> GDS3/3/40 (27<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 14<sup>th</sup> March 1914) 27

dropped and Hastings continued in her post until 1908, before becoming a member of the Council. Also, on a less dramatic note there was another recorded occasion when Gurney and the Council chose to support a member of their staff facing legal charges. In March 1913 ‘Miss Dawes Thompson’, assistant mistress at Kensington High School, was ‘in trouble with the police in connection with a suffragist disturbance for which she stated she was in no way to blame...[while] in charge of a barrel organ’. She too kept her position.<sup>59</sup>

### 3

#### Conflict with the boards

##### i

#### The Board of Education and its LEAs

By the turn of the century Gurney and her coterie of leading councillors may have been familiar with the business of running the Company’s schools. However they were not so familiar with the new Board of Education’s unprecedented level of intervention into English secondary schooling. It came in the form of regulations, based on its policies, which were administered by its LEAs. At the time of Bryce the GSC had not advocated or even anticipated this level of intervention. However, after 1899 they found themselves under much tighter scrutiny. To a degree it ironically replicated the close scrutiny they had always exercised over their own schools. Therefore, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, despite the GSC’s previous awareness that some form of change was about to happen, their interaction with the Board and its LEAs was mainly reactive rather than proactive. They were forced to negotiate for existence as they knew it. In particular, they had to negotiate for the continuation of their

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<sup>59</sup> GDS6/5/1/3 (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1901); GDS15/3/7 Papers relating to headmistress, E. Hastings; GDS6/4/6 (5<sup>th</sup> March 1913) 335

schools' curricula, independence from central and local government control, scholarships for elementary school pupils, and state grants. In addition, they continued to fear the new municipal girls' secondary schools as potential rivals, a situation they had more fully anticipated.

The GST's general resistance to the BED's interference created flash-points. For a period in 1902 Gurney's Education Committee broke off negotiations over its inspections of all the Company's schools. These inspections took place to ensure their annual 'recognition' as educationally efficient, so as to justify grants of public money. By 1903 the Education Committee was also reminding the Board that only the Company should communicate inspection reports to the headmistresses, a policy of censorship replicating that also used with examination board reports. Opposition to similar interference flared into action again in 1909. On that occasion the Committee objected to the Board's reports also being sent to LEAs. In addition, in 1908 and 1909 criticism of the reports' contents formed part of Gurney's defensive approach, she felt they contained 'incorrect statements' and 'inaccuracy'.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, the acceptance into the high schools of pupil-teachers was fraught with dilemmas for Gurney and the Education Committee. After 1903 negotiations took place with LEAs about how many of these students individual high schools would take and the level of fees the Trust would, in return, receive from the state. However, their overriding concern was that 'the teaching of the High Schools be not lowered nor their present social character altered'.<sup>61</sup> As anticipated, by 1905 some parents were complaining about the presence of such students, 'partly from social reasons and partly

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<sup>60</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1902) 12, (9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1903); GDS6/3/1/4 (27<sup>th</sup> May 1908), (10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1909) 30, (28<sup>th</sup> April 1909), (12<sup>th</sup> May 1909)

<sup>61</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (7<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1903) 68, (11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1903) 78, (1<sup>st</sup> May 1904), (8<sup>th</sup> June 1904) 109, (13<sup>th</sup> July 1904), (3<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1904), (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1904)

of increased danger of infection'. One London parent suggested that they 'all be sent' to only one of the GSC's schools in the capital. Gurney and the Committee responded with a February circular to all the headmistresses advising them on how to handle these complaints and on how to prevent them with 'utmost care' by 'watching for the appearance of anything undesirable...in manners, dress, or language' in pupil-teachers.<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile, the Committee did not increase their number in the high schools as the LCC wanted, despite the claim in the circular that the GSC was 'anxious to co-operate in the national work' of preparing teachers for elementary schools. In particular, from March 1905 negotiations with the LCC became more difficult and not just about their number but also about their training. Therefore, in May 1906 Gurney met with Philippa Garrett Fawcett, who by then was a principal assistant in that London body's Education Department, with responsibility for secondary schools and teacher training. Apart from a connection with Gurney through her mother, Philippa had been educated at Clapham High School before attending university. Once again it is possible to see the presence of Gurney's networking behind her official endeavours. However, in this case its impact is hard to gauge. By the end of 1906 the Trust had decided not to apply for recognition of their schools in London and Oxford as formal pupil-teacher centres. Although they continued to admit these students, who became known as 'bursars' in 1907, into their high schools in those cities and in other parts of England. The LCC appealed unsuccessfully against this impasse. The deadlock seems to have suited Gurney given the conflicting pressures she was facing.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (25<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1905) 139 - 140, (8<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1905) 141 - 142, (22<sup>nd</sup> March 1905) 147

<sup>63</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (8<sup>th</sup> March 1905), (12<sup>th</sup> April 1905) 149, (24<sup>th</sup> May 1905) 155 - 157, (28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1906), (9<sup>th</sup> May 1906) 203, (11<sup>th</sup> July 1906), (14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1906) 229, (12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1906) 233, (8<sup>th</sup> May 1907) 251; GDS6/4/3 (9<sup>th</sup> May 1906); McWilliams Tullberg, R. 'P. Fawcett', *ODNB*

The Trust's training of women, already in their twenties, as teachers was more straightforward to negotiate during the years from 1902 to 1914, though not completely free of tension over their numbers and financing. This was partly because the Board and its LEAs were less engaged with the training, the universities more engaged, and class boundaries were less challenged. In that period Gurney oversaw the creation and execution of a post-graduate scheme that could be used in the London high schools with assistance from the London Day Training College. With guidance from Fawcett at the LCC, this college later became London University's Institute of Education. Gurney also supervised the development of similar schemes at the high schools in Oxford, Sheffield, Liverpool, and Newcastle, all of which gained the assistance of their local universities. In addition, she encouraged a scheme for the training of women teachers who had not received a university education and another specifically for art teachers already working for the Trust. Indeed, in 1909 Gurney requested from the BED recognition of the Trust's art training department at Clapham High School. In the 1900s she also oversaw the growth of a music training department at Streatham Hill and Brixton High School. In 1938 these two schools merged. So too did their training departments, which in 1953 eventually became the LCC's Philippa Fawcett College.<sup>64</sup>

It is not surprising that Gurney was behind these GST training schemes and departments given that the fourth objective of the WEU was 'To provide means for Training Female Teachers'. Indeed, her career in teacher training began in the 1860s with her inspection of lessons at the BFSS's elementary school in Wandsworth. It

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<sup>64</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (10<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1902) 25 - 26, (11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1903) 35, (24<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1903), (26<sup>th</sup> July 1904) 115 - 116, (8<sup>th</sup> March 1905) 143, (12<sup>th</sup> April 1905) 150, (6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July 1905) 161 - 167, (10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1906) 222 - 223; GDS3/3/34 ((?) 1908) 103; GDS6/3/1/4 (19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1909), (13<sup>th</sup> April 1910), (11<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1911), (26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913), (25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914); GDS6/3/1/5 (14<sup>th</sup> April 1915 and 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1915), (3<sup>rd</sup> May 1916); Kamm, *Indicative Past*, 215

expanded in the 1870s with the publication of her two books on Froebel's method for kindergarten teaching. Also, the list of Company 'Regulations' for one scheme issued under her name as well as the acknowledgement that two other schemes were 'finally revised by Miss Gurney' and 'ultimately settled by Miss Gurney' were more proofs of her tight control of the training at the GST. Her resistance to outside interference was demonstrated in 1913. After applying for recognition of the training schemes within the high schools, the Education Committee backed away from a conference suggested by the Board.<sup>65</sup>

It was Robert Morant's 1904 *Regulations for Secondary Schools*, with their emphasis on domestic science in girls' curricula, which created some of the greatest conflict between the GST and the Board. Gurney acted in defence of the high schools' established classical and liberal studies as the new century's greater focus on eugenics spread within English society and government.<sup>66</sup> She resisted the consequent increased pressure for gendered education and sought innovation in other ways. For example, a meeting took place at her home in Kensington about the high schools' syllabi for botany in May 1905 and in 1909 she planned an investigation into it for gymnastics.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (24<sup>th</sup> May 1905) 155, (12<sup>th</sup> July 1905) 167; GDS6/3/1/4 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1913), (12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913) 271; GDS6/4/3 (9<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1905); *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1873) 32

<sup>66</sup> Dyhouse, C. (1976) 'Social Darwinistic ideas and the development of women's education in England, 1880 - 1920', *History of Education*, 5, 1, 41 - 58; Delamont and Duffin, *The nineteenth-century woman*; Dyhouse, *Girls growing up*; Digby, A. 'New schools for the middle-class girl', Searby, P. (ed.), (1982) *Educating the Victorian middle class: proceedings of the 1981 annual conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain*, Leicester: History of Education Society, 1 - 25; Manthorpe, C. (1986) 'Science or domestic science? The struggle to define an appropriate science education for girls in early twentieth century England', *History of Education*, 15, 3, 195 - 213; Hunt, 'Divided aims', Hunt, *Lessons for life*, 3 - 21; Hunt, F. (1991) *Gender and policy in English education: schooling for girls 1902 - 1944*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 19 - 26, 52 - 61, 120 - 122; Goodman, J. and Harrop, S. '“The peculiar preserve of the male kind”: women and the education inspectorate, 1893 to the Second World War', Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*, 137 - 155; Nakagomi, *English middle-class girls' high schools*

<sup>67</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (10<sup>th</sup> May 1905) 152; GDS3/3/35 (28<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1909)

Nevertheless, by March 1904 Gurney was on a sub-committee settling the details of a domestic science teaching scheme, created by the headmistress of Croydon High School and proposed for use across all the Company's schools. Given this context, in response to the permanent secretary's new regulations, the Education Committee decided in July 1904 that no increase in the teaching of that subject in the high schools was desirable or needed. The headmistresses were instructed to plan for 1905 accordingly and the Board was informed of those plans. It subsequently questioned them. More planning and correspondence on the matter occurred in 1906 as well as a meeting between Gurney and Maud Lawrence, the Board's Chief Woman Inspector, in March of that year. However, in June the Board informed the Trust that there was still insufficient 'Practical Housewifery' taught in its high schools. The headmistresses voiced strong objection to this assessment. Correspondingly, in July Gurney and the Committee instructed them to again plan for the next academic year 'without' reference to the Board's requirement for further provision. Remarkably, they also decided at this time to apply for recognition of the high schools' domestic science courses 'for the purposes of grants'.<sup>68</sup>

The argument rumbled on. For instance, it took the Trust until May 1907 to reply to one of the Board's letters of December 1906. Meanwhile, in April Gurney held a second conference with the headmistresses to consider the issue. The first had occurred in June 1905. Out of this 1907 conference came a memorandum again opposing the Board's perspective and further countering its pressure. Representatives of both

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<sup>68</sup> GDS3/3/30 (9th March 1904) 23 - 24; GDS6/3/1/3 (23<sup>rd</sup> March 1904) 97, (13<sup>th</sup> July 1904), (24<sup>th</sup> May 1905) 155, (23<sup>rd</sup> June, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct., 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1905), (17<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1906), (14<sup>th</sup> March 1906), (13<sup>th</sup> June 1906) 209, (11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July 1906) 215 - 217

parties then met in June but in July Gurney and the Education Committee still felt only the ‘elements’ of the subject needed to be taught.<sup>69</sup>

Some of the Trust’s reactions during the curriculum dispute of 1904 to 1907 could be described as dismissive and provocative as well as staunch and liberal. Nevertheless, the skirmishes continued, accompanied by a stubborn approach to compromise on both sides. Indeed, such was Gurney’s focus on the issue that in October 1911 she revised the domestic science syllabi used at Oxford High School, in June 1912 she took on the task of communicating with the LCC over the training of domestic science teachers, and in July 1912 she felt the need to hold a meeting in her own home with headmistresses on domestic science examinations. Also, in that July, ‘owing to the difficulties with the...LCC and the Board of Education’, it was decided by the Committee that the Trust would not renew its application for recognition of the ‘Domestic Science Training Department’ at Clapham High School. Although in a rather contradictory manner, in March 1914 and October 1915 it then applied for that recognition, despite the ‘obstruction’ of the LCC. During these negotiations a ‘private’ meeting in late 1914 took place between Maud Lawrence and ‘Miss Paul’, the headmistress of the high school in Clapham. However, as in 1906, any networking behind this meeting did not move the matter on. Paul was left fearing the ‘serious’ consequences of the stalemate, particularly ‘girls...going on to the Battersea Polytechnic’ instead of training at her school. The Board did inspect the department in Clapham as 1914 turned into 1915 but the Committee was unsuccessful in its applications until July 1916, when recognition was finally granted. The recognition was made despite the continuing reluctance of Gurney and the Education Committee

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<sup>69</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1907), (17<sup>th</sup> April 1907), (8<sup>th</sup> May 1907), (10<sup>th</sup> July 1907) 263 - 264



to accept greater delivery of domestic science in their schools. Their reluctance was neatly summed up in the relegation of discussion about needlework in April 1916 to ‘after the war’.<sup>70</sup>

Overall, Gurney did not overcome the persistence of the Board about the need for greater emphasis on domestic science in the high schools but she did resist the full implementation of that policy. By doing so she contributed to the preservation of the schools’ concentration on classical and liberal studies, maintained their first grade status, and lessened the amount of gendered education received by their pupils.

In contrast, in the new century tension between the GST and the BED also arose which, as in the case of the destination of the Board’s inspection reports, could be classified as petty. For instance, some arose over separate fees charged for extra materials. The Board wished to see them included in the general fees. In November 1906 Gurney and the Committee argued that the arrangement ‘was adopted some thirty-four years ago...[it was] cheerfully acquiesced in by parents...of some 70,000 girls...[and the Board’s proposal] would cause grave discontent’. By 1910 there was still no agreement. Equally, the complaint of the headmistresses at their November 1914 conference that the issue of multiple forms by the Board, requiring completion, did not add to their schools’ efficiency suggested that the GST’s and the BED’s default relationship was one of friction, however inconsequential or serious the issue under question. Gurney’s and the Council’s reaction of ‘entire sympathy’ with the complaint reinforced this impression.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> GDS6/7/4 (18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1911); GDS6/3/1/4 (10<sup>th</sup> July 1912) 214, (18<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914); GDS6/3/1/5 (29<sup>th</sup> April 1914, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1914, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1914, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1914, 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1914, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1914), (27<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1915, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1915, 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 1915, and 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1915), (26<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1916), (19<sup>th</sup> April 1916) 172, (17<sup>th</sup> May 1916), and (5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916); GDS6/4/6 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1912)

<sup>71</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1906) 229 - 230; GDS6/3/1/5 (18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1914)

Another of the more serious sources of tension concerned the Board's 1905 scheme for a first grade girls' school in Dulwich. The Company felt it would endanger the existence of their Dulwich High School. Also, this scheme may have been particularly galling for Gurney considering how in the 1870s she had campaigned for an endowed girls' school in that area and had resorted to creating a GSC school when the necessary endowments were not forthcoming. The concern seems to have been justified as the Trust no longer ran a high school in Dulwich after 1913.<sup>72</sup>

A parallel dispute, with potential consequences of considerable importance, concerned control of the GST's high schools at the local level. In May 1906 Gurney and Bousfield met 'Mr Bruce' of the Board to discuss the relationship between the LEAs and the Trust. He may have been one of the three sons of the second president of the GSC from 1881 to 1885, Henry Austin Bruce. The father, Home Secretary from 1868 to 1873 in the English government, also worked with Gurney in the WEU and the LSEUT in the 1870s, as well as for female medical education in the 1890s.<sup>73</sup> In addition, Alice Moore Bruce, daughter of Henry Austin, worked with Gurney within the GST as a councillor and from 1912 as a member of the Teachers Committee.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, any previous indirect connections between Gurney and this Board official did not appear to lessen the tension over the issue. By June Morant, in a meeting with Bousfield, had spoken of possibly withdrawing all existing grants to the Trust if 'some form' of LEA control of the high schools' local committees was not allowed. On this matter, Gurney and other councillors had already expressed, at the time of Bryce, opposition to any loss of their centralised control to local powers. In

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<sup>72</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1905), (13<sup>th</sup> March 1907) 244; GDS6/4/6 (9<sup>th</sup> July 1913)

<sup>73</sup> *Daily News* (31<sup>st</sup> March 1876); *JWEU* (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1877); *Western Mail* (24<sup>th</sup> July 1890); Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 19

<sup>74</sup> GDS6/7/4 (15<sup>th</sup> May 1912); Gareth Evans, W. 'A. Bruce', *ODNB*

1895 they had also pushed for more grants, not fewer. Thus, in 1906 a memorandum opposing Morant's link of grants with LEA control was immediately proposed. Moreover, resistance continued in the years that followed. For example, in March 1909 Gurney and the Education Committee rejected the Board's advice that Nottingham High School's governing body was formed by the LEA. Also, in July 1912 Gurney and other councillors rejected the Board's idea that Liverpool High School be placed totally under the control of its local committee.<sup>75</sup>

As part of this resistance, the principle of reform to preserve was also adopted. In October 1911 Gurney, Northcote, and four other councillors formed a sub-committee to consider the duties involved in the high schools' local governance. This move may have been triggered by the complaints made in person to the Council by the chairman of Newcastle High School's governors. 'Mr Holmes' felt that the 'Board of Education Reports were far more valuable than those of the Council's own inspectors', a criticism which may have rung alarm bells in Gurney's mind. He wanted more visits by Trust inspectors and 'lady' councillors to the school, preferably unannounced, as well as more communication between the headmistress and his committee. Also, he seemed to want the circumvention of the headmistress when it came to reports from him to the Council. The first demand was less of a challenge for Gurney than the second one and the third could be seen in either light.<sup>76</sup>

Gurney and the others in the sub-committee set about revising the 1877 GST regulations about local governance by consulting the headmistresses and thus the views of one local governor were kept in proportion. Moreover, the headmistresses'

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<sup>75</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (9<sup>th</sup> May 1906), (13<sup>th</sup> June 1906) 208; GDS6/3/1/4 (10<sup>th</sup> March 1909); GDS6/4/6 (10<sup>th</sup> July 1912)

<sup>76</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (25<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1911) 163 - 164; GDS3/3/37 (25<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1911) 87

responses demonstrated that not all those at the local level possessed Holmes' desire or capacity to question the quality of the GST's centralised control. Nevertheless, his line of questioning could have assisted the Board and the LEAs in their bid for greater interference in the schools at that level. By March 1912 revised regulations were in place but not enforced. Indeed, some local committees, though not that in Newcastle, retained their use of the original regulations. As in 1877, when there was a more dangerous campaign by some of Clapham High School's shareholders to undermine the Company's centralised control, Gurney's and the Council's power remained pre-eminent. The Board was therefore unable to take advantage of the 1911 and 1912 situation.<sup>77</sup>

An October 1904 threat made by the Board, about the need for the Company to dissolve and vest its property in trustees if its high schools were to go on receiving grants, was complied with more readily than the 1906 threat about local control and grants.<sup>78</sup> In 1902 some of the Company's councillors had even anticipated the implied criticism of 1904 that public money should not go to companies paying dividends. Letters between Bartley, Dunstan, and Bousfield were exchanged on the damaging nature of receiving grants. Dunstan feared the damage and referred to a meeting 'at Miss Gurney's'. Bartley suggested they stop receiving state grants. Bousfield suggested that Bartley resign as he was never at meetings. Bartley responded angrily by writing that 'I was one of the founders of the [Company]... I think I know the object of its formation...No idea was ever conceived of public taxation being received until quite lately...As a taxpayer I object to middle-class schools being subsidised...[it may be] fatal to the interests of the Company'. Bartley had already stopped attending

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<sup>77</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1911) 165 - 166, (6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1911), (27<sup>th</sup> March 1912) 193

<sup>78</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1904)

Council meetings and by June 1903 he ended his very spasmodic attendance at the Education Committee meetings. Gurney chaired some of this heated debate at her home in Kensington as well as at the Company's head office, by then in Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, during 1904 and 1905 Gurney was involved in the planning and execution of the solution to the problem of grants and dividends: the transfer of the GSC into the GST. Attempts at confidential networking formed part of this endeavour. For example, in February 1904 the headmistresses were asked to assist the Council's plans by informing it, in confidence, if they had 'made the acquaintance of, or have means of getting in touch with their local Members [of Parliament], Borough or County or both...[and to] personally or through friends...approach the Members with a view to ascertaining whether they would join the deputation' to the BED about the conversion. Also in March 1904 'confidential communications' about the Company's plans took place between the chairman of the Finance Committee and the Board.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the transfer by 1906, Morant was still left unsatisfied and in that year he pursued his alternative argument about public money and LEA representation on the schools' local committees. In addition, relations with the Board were put under further strain when the BED's 1907 regulations were issued. They linked grants with scholarships for elementary school pupils. The Trust had a rule that no more than 2% of its schools' places were available to such scholars. In contrast these regulations proposed that, in return for the higher of the two grants available, 25% of the places in a secondary school needed to be free to working-class pupils. Gurney and the Education Committee began their negotiation with the Board over this matter in

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<sup>79</sup> GDS1/3/1 letters (19<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> May 1902)

<sup>80</sup> GDS6/4/2 (10<sup>th</sup> February 1904), (11<sup>th</sup> May 1904) 293

December 1907, having consulted with the headmistresses about it in October and November. In May 1909 they decided not to choose the higher grant for their schools.<sup>81</sup> This decision reflected the balance between their educational, social, and financial concerns.

Nevertheless, in 1911 the higher grant was requested for Paddington and Maida Vale High School and for Highbury and Islington High School, due to those schools' financial precariousness. These requests were made despite the inevitable rise in the number of their elementary school scholars and potential growth of LCC power on their governing bodies. Interestingly, the County Council did not agree to provide the higher grant to either school. As a consequence the former school was transferred to it completely and the latter one had to close. The higher grant was also sought for Streatham Hill and Brixton High School in November 1914. Oldham, its headmistress, accepted that 5% of admissions could be elementary school scholars or more, if 'absolutely necessary'. In April 1915 the LCC deferred its response for a year.<sup>82</sup> These outcomes indicated that negotiations with the state were unpredictable even when Gurney and others in the GST somewhat altered their perspectives.

An uneasy relationship between the Trust and the LEAs over inspection also continued into the 1910s. In 1911 'Miss Benton', the headmistress of Hampstead High School, reached the point of refusing to allow an inspection by the LCC. In September of that year Gurney was given the task of settling this dispute. Moreover, in October 1913 Gurney again approached Philippa Garrett Fawcett in an attempt to resolve issues about business studies taught to older girls at the Streatham and Brixton High School.

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<sup>81</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1906) 223, (10<sup>th</sup> July 1907) 263, (16<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1907) 268; GDS6/4/5 (12<sup>th</sup> May 1909) 346

<sup>82</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (17<sup>th</sup> May 1911) 143 - 144, (summer vacation 1911) 153, (6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1911); GDS6/3/1/5 (4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1914) 46, (14<sup>th</sup> April 1915)

By February 1914 there was still no definite solution. Gurney and three others formed a sub-committee specifically to deal with the problem, with its first meeting held at Gurney's home. It was felt that 'undue interference with the schools by the LCC' needed to be avoided in any settlement and that a formal deputation to it should be delayed. Nevertheless, by October 1914 more inspection was accepted by the Education Committee with a view to 'expediting' recognition. After that acceptance, the issue grew more complex. The teaching of business studies became part of a wider initiative regarding 'The Intensive Training of Women for Clerical Employment' at all high schools to meet the country's war needs. At completion of their training the Trust encouraged its students to apply for the 'superior grade' of posts allocated to clerks, illustrating that academic standards and social reputation remained linked GST concerns even in an emergency.<sup>83</sup>

Also, once again Gurney's and the Education Committee's negotiation with the LCC proved to be slow and likely to grind to a halt, with differences as to purposes and outcomes difficult to reconcile. As before, Gurney cautiously circumvented manoeuvres which could increase the presence of state bodies within the GST and reduce its middle-class image. Interestingly, in the Edwardian period the state seemed to view the Trust's schools as an aid to its provision of secondary education for academically able elementary school pupils. It demonstrated a desire to make use of them rather than eliminate them. In the process it relied on finance as a key bargaining tool but it appeared to underestimate the strength of the social, academic, and

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<sup>83</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1911) 193, (2<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April 1913), (8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1913) 267 - 271, (26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913), (4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914) 288, (4<sup>th</sup> March 1914) 300; GDS6/3/1/5 (21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1914) 41, (14<sup>th</sup> April 1915) 87, (1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1915) 137 - 138, (12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1916), (15<sup>th</sup> March 1916) 165; GDS6/7/4 (18<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914), (10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1915)

governing principles which had underpinned the near half a century of work by Gurney and the other councillors.

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The examinations boards

Between February 1915 and March 1916 the Trust's Council and Education Committee, of which Gurney was still a leading member, sought to influence the composition of the BED's co-ordinating authority for public examinations. University representatives and public school teachers were viewed as the most suitable. Also, in February 1915, as chairman of the Examinations and Studies Committee, Gurney planned a conference about the Board's Circular 849 which had raised concerns within the GST about the status of domestic science testing. In April 1915 she drafted a letter to the Board about those concerns.<sup>84</sup> While these were some of the last issues connected to examinations on which she worked, they were by no means the first such issues.

In the 1880s Gurney had initially been appointed to communicate with representatives of the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board, also known as the Joint Board. In letters and meetings she used her detailed knowledge of the pupils' annual results to scrutinise their work. She continued this scrutiny in the 1900s and that capacity had lost none of its critical edge. For instance, in December 1908 with the support of the Education Committee, Gurney claimed that an algebra paper was 'too long' and a history paper was 'unsuitable'. A year later she 'prepared' a letter to the JB about the results of a Latin paper and the contents of arithmetic papers. Bousfield joined her in signing it. A Latin script accompanied the letter 'showing that

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<sup>84</sup> GDS6/3/1/5 (15<sup>th</sup> March 1916); GDS6/6/1 (3<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1915), (25<sup>th</sup> April 1915)



marks have been high when girls have failed to pass' and it was suggested that 'conditions be amended'. In addition, Gurney asked that in future arithmetic papers 'be framed more in accordance with the teaching now given in our Schools' and she gave leverage to her criticisms by alluding to the potential use of an alternative examining body.<sup>85</sup> Gurney's scrutiny was supported by headmistresses at conferences, arranged and chaired by her or other councillors in the 1890s and 1900s. They were usually held at Kensington High School and each conference tended to concentrate on the teaching and examination of a single subject across all the GST schools, although one which she led in 1907 was specifically about the JB.<sup>86</sup>

Gurney continued in the same vein in the spring of 1910. Among other issues, she reported to the Education Committee that she was 'dealing' with the unsuitability of the Joint Board's time-table and the 'necessity' of omitting Saturday sittings. Rather than dismissing what could be seen as the Trust's somewhat self-absorbed remarks and requests, 'Mr Gross' of the JB demonstrated a willingness to appease Gurney. A meeting with Gross was set for June and agreements were made: for example, in order to avoid 'howlers', the marking of Latin papers sat by the Trust's pupils would be revisited before issuing results. Also, only papers with fewer candidates would be set on a Saturday and possibly a special syllabus in geography would be created for the Trust or 'an easier paper' set.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, despite or because of this response, Gurney persisted with her critical and leveraged approach. For example, in 1911 she signed, on behalf of the

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<sup>85</sup> GDS6/3/1/2 (12<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1881), (16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1882) 251 - 267; GDS6/3/1/3 (14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1904); GDS6/3/1/4 (9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1908) 22, (13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1909), (22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1909) 73 - 74, and (summer vacation 1911); GDS6/6/1(15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1909)

<sup>86</sup> GDS6/4/4 (13<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1907); GDS17/1/1 Reports on subject conferences, 1895 - 1903

<sup>87</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (19<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1910), (16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1910) 82, (13<sup>th</sup> April 1910) 89, (11<sup>th</sup> May 1910) 95, (15<sup>th</sup> June 1910)

GST Council, a memorial to London University as part of negotiations about the use of that university's matriculation examinations.<sup>88</sup> In May 1913 she planned a meeting at her home to discuss the perceived faults of another Joint Board history paper and by October 1913 she had prepared a report on the growing cost of its examination entrance fees. In addition, in June 1914 Gurney organised and led another conference with the headmistresses about the JB. This time they met to discuss its proposed alteration of its Higher Certificate Examination. Once the 1914 meeting was over, she wrote a letter to Gross in which she suggested a different alteration which would better suit the Trust's schools. Also, she again resorted to the threat that an alternative examination board might be used if the Trust's perspective was not accommodated. In February 1915 Gurney continued to lead the scrutiny of examinations at a further conference.<sup>89</sup>

The same assertive approach was used by Gurney towards the RDS examination board. Gurney became a vice-president of that Society in 1891, an appointment which may partly explain the creation of an examination by the RDS specifically for the high schools. Nevertheless, in 1908 Gurney proposed a letter of complaint about its results for pupils at Clapham High School. It was claimed that 'they do not correctly represent the high character of the teaching' at the school. This dispute escalated into a year of conflict involving familiar tactics: a consultation with all the headmistresses, the creation of a sub-committee led by Gurney, and a proposed memorial requesting that the RDS make its exam 'more suitable to the schools of the Trust'. More complaining

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<sup>88</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (29<sup>th</sup> March 1911) 137, (16<sup>th</sup> May 1911)

<sup>89</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1910) 125, (22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1911, 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1911, and 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1911), (17<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1912) 177, (6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1912) 228, (7<sup>th</sup> May 1913); GDS6/3/1/5 (29<sup>th</sup> April 1914, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1914, and 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1914), (17<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1915 and 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1915); GDS6/6/1 (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1913), (3<sup>rd</sup> June 1914) 180

letters were sent about results in 1909 and finally it was declared at a conference with representatives of the Society that the RDS examination would no longer be used.<sup>90</sup>

However, one of the effects of her concentration on achieving strong results was the perception of pressure on the pupils. Between July 1907 and February 1908 Gurney's attention was drawn to this issue. She consulted complaining parents and concerned headmistresses before writing reports on her findings and sending a final circular on the issue to the high schools.<sup>91</sup>

Overall, the disputes with the Board of Education and its LEAs, the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Board, and the Royal Drawing Society's examinations board demonstrated the scope and changing nature of the challenges Gurney faced by the Edwardian period. They also demonstrated her continuing use of networking and censorship as aids to achieving her goals, although their effectiveness was limited. She sought to uphold the GST's independence and its high schools' first grade status while recognising that the Trust needed to embrace a degree of innovation and develop financial security. As a liberal feminist and social conservative Gurney worked during the final fifteen years of her career with the GST, as she had during the first 30 years, to ensure the organisation's system of educational provision was sustained and able to survive into the future. However, for a time this seemed less than guaranteed and when Gurney died she may have felt this important aspect of her work was failing.

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<sup>90</sup> GDS6/3/1/4 (28<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1908) 18, (17<sup>th</sup> March 1909), (2<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July 1909) 50 - 51, (13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1909), (19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1909) 63, (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1909); GDS6/4/6 (10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1909)

<sup>91</sup> GDS6/3/1/3 (24<sup>th</sup> July 1907) 265, (27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1907), (11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1907) 282, (22<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1908), (19<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1908)

## Reconstitution

The constant negotiation with the Board of Education over different issues, which halted or at least stalled that body's interference in the Trust's affairs, did not prevent a particularly challenging set of circumstances to develop from 1908 to 1921. They were connected to the GST's legal status and to its financial solvency. Indeed, the Board was caught up in the creation of these interlinked crises and in the solutions to them. Therefore, while it may have been disliked by Gurney and the rest of the Council, those years indicated how far the two organisations' work was woven together.

The GST's constitutional crisis was triggered by the legal opinion, received in late 1908, that its transfer from the status of a company to a trust during 1905 had not been completed adequately within the terms of the law. The Board of Education required an end to this legal uncertainty if the high schools were to go on receiving the lower grant. Moreover, by that decade the GST felt it needed at least the lower grant to ensure the high schools' survival. Therefore, in April 1909 the Trust attempted to reconstitute itself, by renegotiating the consolidation of its mortgages with the Alliance Assurance Company. Such a consolidation had been necessary to originally acquire the status of a trust in 1905.

From 1908 confidential networking was used to ease what became difficult renegotiation, just as it had been used when the Company first began the transfer process in 1904. In a March 1909 letter from Magnus to Northcote, the former wrote: 'Lord Crewe, our President, is nearly related to the Rothchilds, Lord Rothchild is Chairman of the Alliance...Could not something be done by personal influence, outside of the lawyers...especially if we had the backing of the Board of

Education...Please let this be circulated as a confidential letter'. Also, in May 1909 a deputation, including Gurney, met on a formal basis with representatives of the Board to discuss the situation. However, neither strategy prevented the Alliance from offering financially challenging new terms and the BED from approving them.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, the Trust remained cautious and did not agree to the offer despite the approval. Instead, in April and June 1910 it sought further legal opinion. Also, a memorandum from the Finance Committee, in which Gurney still worked, was sent to 'Mr Bruce' with a view to the Board approving an alternative scheme for reconstitution and thereby continuing to supply the lower grant. A meeting with him was arranged for the end of June, although according to this memorandum Bruce had already had 'informal discussions' with the Trust earlier in 1910. In contrast, the crisis was not helped when in July the matter was openly discussed in the House of Commons. Once again networking was resorted to in order to help contain the situation. Sir Henry Craik, MP, past Secretary of the Scottish Education Department, and past member of the Finance Committee promised to befriend the Trust as far as he could if any further questions affecting it were raised in the House. Bruce was seen again in October, when he declared himself 'most anxious for the continued welfare of the Trust schools' but feared the Treasury would be difficult to satisfy due to the GST's weak constitutional and financial footing.<sup>93</sup>

Further schemes for the reconsolidation of the mortgages were considered by the Finance Committee between late October and December 1910 and in December a Special Committee on the Constitution of the Trust was established to concentrate on

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<sup>92</sup> GDS6/4/5 (25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1908), (7<sup>th</sup> April 1909) 328, (12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May 1909)

<sup>93</sup> GDS6/4/6 (7<sup>th</sup> April 1910), (8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1910), (13<sup>th</sup> July 1910) 129, (12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1910) 142

solving the crisis. Gurney was the only female councillor appointed to it. The other four councillors included Northcote, the new chairman of the Council. It met three times until February 1911. However, Board officials reacted to one of the proposed schemes by stating that ‘if the scheme was carried through grants would be neither more or less assured than they are now’. Nevertheless, about the same time Morant wrote more positively that there was a ‘good prospect’ that the Treasury would consent to it. Despite this, Gurney argued that the shareholders at the AGM, about to take place in March, should only receive a short statement concerning the ongoing renegotiation. Once again she and the other councillors sought to contain events. Finally, in May 1912 the Board approved a scheme for reconstitution which the Trust could also accept. It was then successfully put to its shareholders and arranged with its financiers.<sup>94</sup>

Although the GST averted the complete loss of public money, some financial damage occurred during the three and a half years of the constitutional crisis. An October 1912 circular sent to ‘Brighton subscribers’ for shares explained that ‘Pending the amendment of our Constitution...it had been impossible for us to avail ourselves of the offers of subscribers, or to issue shares for the consideration of the sums which were entrusted to us for that purpose, and on which in the meantime we have been paying interest at the rate of 4 per cent per annum’.<sup>95</sup> These circumstances exacerbated a financial crisis which had already begun to grow, alongside the constitutional crisis, for a variety of reasons. By 1914 those reasons by themselves would probably have caused the threat of bankruptcy but the uncertainty about the Trust’s legal status made that threat more potent.

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<sup>94</sup> GDS6/4/6 (9<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1910), (13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1910), (15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1911), (15<sup>th</sup> May 1912)

<sup>95</sup> GDS6/4/6 (30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1912) 268

‘become bankrupt’<sup>96</sup>

Between 1873 and 1888 33 high schools and one middle school were opened by the Company. Another four high schools were opened by 1901, although four others no longer existed by then. At the end of 1893 35 were in simultaneous operation. They represented the peak of the schools’ numerical strength during any year of Gurney’s career or since that time, although she oversaw the opening of 38. Between 1888 and 1945, due to their ongoing insolvency, fourteen of the high schools and the middle school were either closed outright or were merged with other GST schools or were sold to other educational bodies. Remarkably, eight of them underwent those endings between 1907 and 1913. That over 50% of the lost schools were lost in a period of only six years illustrated the intensity of the financial crisis the Trust suffered just before the Great War. It was also illustrated by the near 20% drop in pupils attending the GST schools between 1906 and 1911 as well as by seven of the schools making a financial loss in 1911 and eight doing so in 1912.<sup>97</sup>

In March 1912 Northcote issued a warning to the Council. He wrote in a memorandum: ‘we may find ourselves in very serious financial difficulties this year...we might before long find ourselves unable to pay the salaries of our teachers’. By February 1913 Northcote was proposing to cut teacher and form numbers in the surviving schools which were making a loss. He argued that ‘it was absolutely necessary to decrease expenditure to a great extent...in order to save the situation’. Instead, Gurney proposed not raising salaries and not paying teaching staff when they

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<sup>96</sup> GDS6/4/7 (22<sup>nd</sup> April 1914) memorandum by the Finance Committee to the Council

<sup>97</sup> GDS6/4/6 (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1913), (5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1913); these figures were also compiled using the details of GST schools’ foundation and demise provided in Sondheimer and Boddington, *The GPDST 1872 - 1972*, 29 and Kamm, *Indicative Past*, appendix II

were absent. She also proposed not raising the fees of girls aged fourteen, as she felt it deterred parents from keeping the girls in the schools. By April 1914 the situation had not improved according to another memorandum. This time it was from all of the Finance Committee to the Council. They requested its 'grave attention' because 'every feature of the business is dark'. They argued that in the past 'there were on the Alliance Board friends of the Trust, philanthropists. In the future the matter will be dealt with on a strict business footing...should they decide to call in their loan the Trust would become bankrupt'. It was felt the Trust needed to be 'saved from disaster'.<sup>98</sup>

There were probably at least four reasons why the ever precarious financial existence of the Trust tipped into a financial crisis when it did. After 1902, competition from the new state secondary schools combined with the challenging regulations surrounding the receipt of state grants, the declining attraction of the ageing infrastructure of the schools, and the lack of income caused by the constitutional crisis. Nevertheless, with the aid of networking, the councillors continued to negotiate for grants and for reconstitution but without greatly altering their restrictions on scholarship pupils from elementary schools. They continued to organise and advertise their schools as first grade equivalents of boys' public schools, unlike some of their rivals. They also held fast to their original principle that all their schools had to be self-sufficient regarding local running costs and that the schools continually making a loss could not use the more solvent ones' surplus income.

Even the one change in the councillors' financial approach was a revival rather than an innovation. Gurney and the Council sought to create a permanent endowment for the Trust's buildings. They felt this scheme would ensure their schools' survival

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<sup>98</sup> GDS6/4/6 - 7 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1912), (5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1913), and (22<sup>nd</sup> April 1914)



into the future in a way other financial policies had not and could not ensure. About 40 years before, in her 1871 article and her 1872 pamphlet, Gurney identified the lack of endowments as a fundamental problem facing the creation of girls' secondary schools which were not financed by the state. However, in the early 1870s she and the other GST founders gave up waiting for the ESC to provide them with an adequate endowment of the sort boys' public schools in England enjoyed. Instead they created a company, with shareholders, to shoulder the high schools' building costs. In contrast, in 1912 Gurney and other councillors revived the idea of seeking an adequate endowment although this time they planned to develop it themselves.

In February of that year Gurney joined the Special Committee on the Proposed Endowment Fund. It met twice and decided to launch a public campaign for £50,000 which was the equivalent in today's terms of about £5.75 million. It was also decided that the campaign would be steered by another new body: the Building Fund Appeal Committee. That committee, with Gurney as a member, met on 25 occasions from May 1912 to May 1914, twice at Gurney's home in February 1914. In July 1912 an appeal letter, signed by Gurney and others, was published in the *Times*. On the same day a leading article appeared in that newspaper about the campaign. However, Alfred Harmsworth, the owner of the *Daily Mail*, was unsuccessfully approached about his newspaper 'advocating the cause of the Trust'. Nevertheless, Gurney created a promotional book with a six page introduction and 30 pages of photographs of the schools still in operation. It was based on similar books produced in 1900 and 1907. That she was asked in 1907 'to revise' the 1900 one and in 1912 asked 'as far as

possible...[to] re-issue' the 1907 one suggests she was the anonymous author of the 1900 original. 2,000 copies of the 1912 version were printed.<sup>99</sup>

The City of London's companies were also asked for donations, 'where possible...by personal appeal by individual members of the Council'. Gurney agreed to write to seven members of six companies and Northcote agreed to write to three members although Magnus did not agree to such a strategy. In addition, Gurney and three different councillors suggested others with wealth and status within English society who could be approached. Six of the seventeen people she mentioned were titled and most had addresses in the squares and streets of central London. However, once again personal networking was not as effective as hoped. By the end of October 1912 the building fund stood at under £2,000 with only the Clothworkers Company as a City donor, although its £500 was the highest single contribution. Gurney and 'Mrs Rawlings' together contributed £600 which was equivalent in today's terms of about £70,000. Most other donations in 1912 were below £25. Nevertheless, the use of networking continued in late 1912 and early 1913. This time officers of the City's companies were 'personally' and 'privately' approached by Trust councillors and by June 1913 two more companies had donated to the fund.<sup>100</sup>

Also, from December 1912 to November 1913 Gurney was a member of the Trust's Public Dinner Executive Committee. Its brief was to plan a public event which would further advertise the appeal. It met on 21 occasions, again twice at 69 Ennismore Gardens. This work lacked the intellectual prestige of much of her GST

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<sup>99</sup> GDS6/4/4 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1907) 218; GDS6/4/6 (28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1912, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1912, 1<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1912, and 10<sup>th</sup> July 1912); GDS6/4/7 (6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914 and 13<sup>th</sup> May 1914); GDS23/1/2 - 3; Anon., *The high schools*; inflation calculator

<sup>100</sup> GDS6/4/6 (9<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1912) 259 - 270, (30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1912), (15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1913 and 4<sup>th</sup> June 1913); inflation calculator

work but to Gurney in 1913 it may have seemed as vital. Consequently, the headmistresses were told in December that their guests ‘should be persons likely to subscribe to the Fund’ and by February their guests were unequivocally ‘expected’ to do so. This focus on donations was also made clear in June at a conference of the Council with the organisers of the dinner. Therefore, when Gurney was involved in the choice of guests for the high table she again suggested people with wealth and status, not just educationalists.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, in January 1913 Gurney was also given the task of persuading Sadler to be one of the guest speakers. In the course of their careers they had been able to network directly and indirectly across seven educational organisations, thus it is not surprising that this particular piece of networking succeeded. Nor is it surprising that Bryce agreed to speak, or that Davies and Katherine Jex-Blake accepted invitations to the high table. Lastly, Gurney enlisted ‘Mrs Rawlings’ and her sister, Amelia, as hosts of another table of guests. After several delays the dinner took place in November 1913 at the Savoy Hotel in London.<sup>102</sup>

However, despite their different efforts over two years to endow the Trust schools, Gurney and her colleagues mostly met with financial reticence and not just within the capital. Isabel Rhys, headmistress of Liverpool High School, informed the appeal committee that she would not be able to raise money in that city as public feeling there was more supportive of schooling provided by its local government. ‘Miss Hiley’ of Newcastle High School also feared the appeal would not receive a keen public response. Indeed, opposition to it appeared in a June 1913 letter printed in the

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<sup>101</sup> GDS6/4/6 (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1912) 282, (21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1913) 329, (2<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 1913), (2<sup>nd</sup> July 1913), (12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913)

<sup>102</sup> GDS6/4/6 (29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1913 and 21<sup>st</sup> May 1913); GDS6/4/7 (8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1913 and 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913)

*Financial Times* from ‘a parent’ who argued that the shareholders should shoulder building costs and not the fee-payers. The GST responded in print but the sentiments of the June letter were likely to have been held by more than one parent.<sup>103</sup>

So it was that by January 1914 the endowment fund still stood at only around £8,000 which was the equivalent in today’s terms of just under £1 million and by April 1914 words like ‘grave’, ‘dark’, ‘bankrupt’, and ‘disaster’ were used to describe the financial crisis facing the Trust. Gurney reacted by persisting with the same strategies as she had used in 1912 and 1913. She wrote a pamphlet making a further appeal. She identified residents in Putney and Wimbledon who could be personally approached for donations and she agreed to consult the founder of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides organisations, Robert Baden-Powell, over another request to the Mercers Company. This approach to Baden-Powell was probably based on the connection between Gurney and his mother, Henrietta, who had been an early councillor of the GSC. However, Gurney’s continued use of networking and publications again failed to produce an adequate sum for an endowment. In May 1914 the Building Fund Appeal Committee held its last meeting.<sup>104</sup>

The failure of the scheme to meet its target may have encouraged the offer by the Board of Education and the LCC in June 1914 to ‘greatly’ improve the finances of the Trust. In return the Trust needed to agree to the management of its nine London schools by one joint governing body which included LCC representatives and to elementary school scholars forming 10% of their pupils. This plan was first discussed in an ‘unofficial conversation’ between ‘Dr Scott’ of the Board and Northcote. In

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<sup>103</sup> GDS6/4/6 (23<sup>rd</sup> October 1912), (9<sup>th</sup> July 1913) 397 - 399

<sup>104</sup> GDS6/4/7 (12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913), (14<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1914, 6<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1914, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April 1914, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1914); Warren, ‘R. Baden-Powell’; inflation calculator

addition, Gurney reported to councillors that ‘Dr Garnett’ of the LCC had ‘expressed to her his willingness to give what help he could’ over grants. However, there remained concern within the Trust over the number of scholars proposed as well as over LCC representatives becoming part of its Council.<sup>105</sup>

Instead, the GST survived in a parlous financial state until the end of the Great War. Then in October 1918 it again entered into financial negotiations with the Board of Education and this time it sought the higher grant for all its schools. As before, a main area of argument was the Board’s 25% requirement, given that the Trust preferred 2%. Hastings and Woodhouse, who had worked closely with Gurney as headmistresses and councillors, attempted to explain that preference. In a 1918 memorandum they argued that ‘the high reputation of some of the Trust Schools...would be fatally injured by...being largely composed of girls of a different type’. They felt that ‘speech, vocabulary and general knowledge would be of a lower standard’ among those scholarship girls and that existing parents would withdraw pupils. It is interesting to see how their argument trod a thin line between educational concern and class discrimination, both of which seemed to overshadow the financial aspect of the matter in their thinking. The existing headmistresses also argued in 1918 that a 25% intake would be ‘fatal’.<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, it was probably realised that some sort of new settlement with the Board needed to be reached. In 1919 Oldham argued in a report to the Council from a headmistresses’ conference: ‘our schools, if they cut free from the state, would tend to be in a backwater rather than in the full stream of progress’.<sup>107</sup> So, finally in 1921 a

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<sup>105</sup> GDS6/4/6 (13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 1913 and 15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1913), (9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914)

<sup>106</sup> GDS6/4/7 (8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1918) 314, (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1918), (29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1919) 392

<sup>107</sup> GDS6/3/1/6 (24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1919) 236

settlement was reached. In return for all the GST schools receiving the higher grant, 10% of their intake could be elementary school scholars and LEAs could increase their influence over their local committees. Bankruptcy was averted and until 1938, when Clapham High School and Streatham Hill and Brixton High School merged, the 25 remaining high schools of 1913 survived.<sup>108</sup> How Gurney would have conducted the post-war negotiations and what she would have thought of the settlement can only be surmised. She died in October 1917, never knowing if the financial crisis would bring an end to the GST and its high schools for which she had worked since 1872.

### Conclusion

Together with previous chapters, this chapter's analysis uses the concepts developed as refinements of networking theory by feminist historians such as Goodman, Martin, Harrop, Fitzgerald, Smyth, and Smitley. It also provides, as did previous chapters, a further measurement of Gurney's network of the sort Fuchs advocated.<sup>109</sup> Gurney's early career was probably assisted by her family's network of educational relationships and spaces but she went on to expand whatever degree of networking she inherited. By the 1900s she had many more links with educationalists across organisations and campaigns than others in her family. These links worked in tandem with her professional responsibilities and connections. On occasions throughout her career this informal network helped her to expand her identity, performance, and agency as an educational bureaucrat and business woman. However, on other occasions she found it difficult to alter the boundaries of her influence through the use of networking. At those times of failure it is possible to see how her feminine private/public borderland

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<sup>108</sup> Littlewood, *Some account of the history of the Girls' Public Day School Trust*, 14 - 15; Kamm, *Indicative past*, 207 - 215

<sup>109</sup> Martin and Goodman, *Women and education*; Goodman and Harrop, *Women and educational policy-making*; Fitzgerald and Smyth, *Women educators*; Smitley, *The feminine public sphere*; Fuchs, 'Networks'

was perilous as well as secure. It did not always have the networked density and intensity to enhance female education as she hoped it would.

Indeed, this chapter clearly demonstrates the limitations of her networking. When Gurney met Philippa Garrett Fawcett in professional circumstances in 1906 and 1913 very little advantage appears to have come out of these encounters, despite their shared backgrounds. Similarly, her approach to Robert Baden-Powell in 1914 was unfruitful despite their previous connection. In addition, the GST councillors' attempt to use 'personal influence' with Nathaniel Rothchild in 1909 did not reap the results they wanted. Moreover, Gurney was also probably involved in the unsuccessful decisions to have 'Informal', 'private', and 'unofficial' conversations about official matters with 'Mr Bruce' in 1910 as well as with Maud Lawrence and 'Dr Scott' in 1914. In 1905 Gurney had already shown she was keen to try a direct and speculative approach to Lawrence concerning VL matters. Equally unhelpful throughout 1912 to 1914 were Gurney's 'personal' appeals to those of wealth within English society. Her networking had limitations and this was made even clearer in the Finance Committee's 1914 memorandum which said: 'there were on the Alliance Board friends of the Trust, philanthropists. In the future the matter will be dealt with on a strict business footing'. In other words, previously helpful informality could be replaced by potentially less helpful professionalism.

Unsurprisingly, just as the professional culture of the Board of Education, the LCC, and the Alliance Assurance Company restricted the impact of networked negotiations, so the Trust's professional culture which enveloped Gurney and the other councillors alerted them to the inadequacy of some informal contacts, for example, with the LCC's 'Dr Garnett' in 1914. Again unsurprisingly, it was the more intense networking, cultivated across many years and enterprises, with such reformers as

Buss, Fitch, Garrett Fawcett, and Bryce which was most able to be of use to Gurney. Networking was an integral part of why and how Gurney became a leader of female education, although it needed to be complemented by her growing professionalism. Indeed, it was this professional skill and knowledge which ensured she became that leader. Gurney used bureaucracy to her advantage. As Davies and Kjaer argued, hierarchical governance and networked governance sustain each other but as Fuchs argued increased professionalism reduces a reliance on networking.<sup>110</sup>

However, it is also worth noting that while Gurney's reliance on networking could lessen as her professionalism grew, she still seems to have bequeathed to the GST a small group of *protégées* who were willing to uphold her approach to educational governance after her death. In that respect it can be argued some of the power of her networking did not die with her. This legacy, among many others of greater importance, is dealt with in the next chapter.

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<sup>110</sup> Davies, *Challenging governance theory*; Kjaer, *Governance*; Fuchs, 'Networks'



Table 6.1: *A comparative overview of Gurney's and other councillors' attendance rates at meetings of governing bodies*

*Observations:*

At GST meetings in the 1870s and 1880s Gurney's attendance rate was noticeably higher than that of Roundell (Council chairman), Stanley, Grey, and Shirreff. In particular, that can be said of Gurney's rate in comparison to that of Grey and Shirreff. Also, after the 1890s those four other founders took no part in GST meetings, unlike Gurney who maintained her relatively very high attendance rate and served as chairman of three key committees until 1916. Indeed, while Gurney was a member of all five key committees from the 1870s to the 1910s, Shirreff was a member of only two, Grey of only one, and neither were members after the 1890s.

*Comparisons:*

### GST Council

June 1872 - May 1875 (total number of meetings 76): Gurney 63/**83%** attendance rate,  
Grey 48/63%, Roundell (chairman) 43/57%

1878 - 1887: Gurney **100%** in 4 of those years (1878, 1882, 1886, and 1887)

1885 (total 11): Gurney 10/**91%**, Roundell 6/55%, Grey 5/46%, Stanley and Bartley  
4/36%, Shirreff 2/18%

1891 (total 14): Gurney 10/**71%**, Stanley 9/64%, Shirreff 8/57%, Roundell 6/43%,  
Bartley 4/29%, Grey 0/0%

1893 - 1916: Gurney **100%** in 10 of these years (1894, 1898, 1903, 1904, 1906, 1907,  
1909, 1910, 1911, 1915)

### GST AGM/EGM

1872 - 1893 (total 29): Gurney 26/**90%**, Stanley 22/76%, Roundell 19/66%, Shirreff  
11/38%, Grey 9/31%

1894 - 1916 (total 33): Gurney 27/**82%**, Roundell, 5/15%, Stanley, Grey, and Shirreff  
0/0%

### GST Finance Committee

Oct. 1877 - May 1880 (total 53): Gurney 48/**91%**, Stone (chairman and Council  
chairman) 51/96%, Stanley 17/32%, Shirreff 3/6%, Bartley 2/4%, Roundell and Grey  
were not members

March 1903 - March 1914 (total 214): Gurney 197/**92%**, Northcote (chairman and  
Council chairman from 1910) 195/91%

### GST Education Committee

May 1875 - June 1877 (total 51): Gurney 44/**86%**, Stanley 39/77%, Roundell (chairman) 35/69%, Grey 30/59%, Shirreff 12/24%

July 1877 - June 1882 (total 130): Gurney 125/**96%**, Stone (chairman) 111/85%, Stanley 88/68%, Roundell 61/47%, Shirreff 31/24%, Grey 11/9%

July 1902 - July 1916 (total 247): Gurney (chairman 1897 - 1913) 232/**94%**, Northcote 230/93%, Digby (chairman from 1913) 228/92%, (although, unlike Gurney, neither Northcote nor Digby began their service in 1875)

### GST Sites and Building Committee

Oct. 1877 - Jan. 1886 (total 126): Gurney 116/**92%**, Stone (chairman) 118/94%, Stanley 81/64%, Bartley 31/25%, Grey and Shirreff were not members

Feb. 1886 - Dec. 1898 (total 115): Gurney 98/**85%**, Galton (chairman) 90/78%

Dec. 1898 - June 1910 (total 119): Gurney 110/**92%**, Buxton Morrish (chairman) 65/55%, Bousfield (Council chairman) 96/81%

July 1910 - July 1916 (total 54): Gurney 45/**83%**, Magnus (chairman) 40/74%

### GST Teachers Committee

Oct. 1879 - Dec. 1882 (total 63): Gurney 62/**98%**, Stone (chairman) 59/94%, Stanley 44/70%, Grey and Shirreff were not members

Oct. 1879 - Dec. 1885 (total 121): Gurney 115/**95%**, Stone (chairman) 116/96%

Oct. 1879 - July 1916 (total 486): Gurney (chairman 1913 - 1916) 445/**92%**, exact comparison is not possible as no other councillor served for that length of time

Nov. 1897 - Nov. 1906: Gurney **100%**

#### GST Examinations and Studies

Oct. 1884 - Oct. 1896 (total 54): Gurney 50/**93%**, Stone (chairman) 49/91%, Stanley 4/7% Grey and Shirreff were not members

Oct. 1884 - May 1916 (total 121): Gurney (chairman 1911 - 1916) 116/**96%**, exact comparison is not possible as no other councillor served for that length of time

Oct. 1884 - Jan. 1890: Gurney **100%**

Jan. 1898 - May 1916: Gurney **100%**

#### CLC Council

March 1875 - Oct. 1907 (total 163): Gurney 79/**49%**, exact comparison with Buss and Fitch is not possible as Buss did not attend after June 1893 and Fitch after July 1902

March 1875 - June 1893 (total 99): Buss 44/44%

Feb. 1877 - July 1902 (total 129): Fitch 61/47%

Feb. 1877 - June 1893 (total 79): Gurney 42/**53%**, Buss 52/66%, Fitch 40/51%

#### PHC Council and Executive Committee

March 1888 - Nov. 1915 (total 96): Gurney 75/**78%**, Savory (chairman) 62/65%

#### GC Executive Committee, after 1910 known as the Council

Nov. 1894 - June 1917 (total 239): Gurney (chairman on 13 occasions) 142/**59%**, exact comparison with Fitch and Davies is not possible as Fitch did not attend after June 1903 and Davies after April 1904

Feb. 1898 - June 1903 (total 72): Gurney 38/**53%** (chairman on 7 occasions), Fitch 30/42% (chairman on 17 occasions), Davies 71/99% (chairman on 3 occasions)

### LSEUT Council

Attendance records not extant

### Victoria League

Attendance records not extant

## Chapter seven: Mary Gurney's legacies

### Introduction

The end of Gurney's career immediately brought with it differing amounts of change to the governance and the finances of the GST and GC, two of the three organisations she still worked for in 1917. It created for a short period a more pronounced vacuum in the GST's Council and five key committees than it created in GC's governing bodies, for which she had always been less active. In contrast, the GST's weak finances were barely improved but GC's financial health was noticeably improved on paper, although it did take almost a decade for Gurney's monetary legacy to have its full effect. However, despite this delay, her death led to the creation of scholarships by the Trust and by the College which benefitted a small proportion of females for over half a century. These partly anticipated administrative and financial changes were her work's less important and more private legacies.

Of far more importance after 1917 were the less immediate and more public, less planned and more uncommon effects of her career. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century, the professional training, tertiary studies, and secondary education of generations of women and girls possessed characteristics and followed patterns established in part by Gurney's work. These inherited features were significant legacies. They affected not only females in the Trust high schools and the college in Cambridge, but also those in other schools and colleges within England, across the British Empire, and in other parts of the world. Moreover, those who were influenced by Gurney's attitudes and methods after her death far outnumbered those who were influenced by them while she was alive.

However, these more important consequences of her career, which infiltrated considerable educational space across a hundred years, had similar limitations to those of her work when she was alive. While they continued to reduce gender divisions within education, they also continued to discriminate, to varying degrees across the twentieth century, against the education of working-class females. Also, they continued to uphold fluctuating quantities of racial and ethnic discrimination within education over that period of time.

Furthermore, it is plain that the major effects of Gurney's work did not by themselves lead to the survival of earlier educational progress or to its further development. The legacies of her colleagues' careers mattered to those processes too, whether they died before her or outlived her. Their professional connections and networking with Gurney and with each other clearly demonstrated that none of them alone could have ensured that survival and further development. Indeed, even her minor legacies were upheld by a group of *protégées* who protected them after 1917 until their own deaths.

Not only that, many of the social, economic, and political factors which had led to changes in female education during the Victorian and Edwardian periods continued to affect that education after the Great War and they were joined by new factors also unconnected to Gurney. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the more public consequences of her career after 1917 made a significant contribution to female education up to the present, even if they were not equitable or unique. Chapters three, four, five, and six seek to show how her work made an impact when she was alive. This chapter seeks to show that it continued to have a powerful role after she died.

1

Personal remembrance

i

The GPDST

Gurney's financial bequest to the GST may have been relatively insignificant but it is still worth briefly examining because it reflected an important thread in her thinking about the purpose of secondary education. She bequeathed to the Trust the 100 £5 shares she held in it and £500. The latter amount was the equivalent in today's terms of just under £35,500. She asked that the shares were sold and that the money raised was invested with the other sum. The income produced was then to be used to finance academic scholarships for senior girls at the high schools. They became known as the Mary Gurney School Scholarships after the first, of two, was established in 1919. They had a value of £21 per annum for two years and were awarded only to girls who were preparing for university. By the late 1970s one was still awarded, although by then more as an indication of academic ability than for its financial value.<sup>1</sup> Gurney's

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<sup>1</sup> Probate Registry; GDS21/2/5; inflation calculator

emphasis throughout her career on the link between a high school education and university study was reflected in these minor legacies.

This emphasis and Gurney's specific 'sympathies' for classics and GC led to another less important legacy of her career. Two months after her death, past and serving headmistresses formed themselves into a committee of 60, with an executive led by Gadesden as its chairman and Woodhouse as its secretary. They wished to permanently commemorate 'the work of the last survivor of the Founders of these schools...in such a way, that no girl in the Schools can fail to know her name'. Therefore, over the next few years the committee created the 'Mary Gurney Memorial Scholarship', also known as the Mary Gurney Leaving Scholarship, with a value of £75 per annum for three years. It was funded by the income from an investment of about £1,800 which was raised through an appeal to all the high schools. The sum raised was the equivalent in today's terms of about £103,000.<sup>2</sup> It was to be held by one ex-Trust pupil reading classical studies at GC, with that college's classics entrance examination as the test. It was first awarded in 1924. From 1957, due to the decline in its financial value, it became known as the Mary Gurney Travelling Scholarship which could be used for travel to ancient sites in Europe and Asia by an ex-GST pupil at GC. This scholarship was still awarded and managed by a committee of Trust headmistresses in 1970.<sup>3</sup> The most striking feature of this legacy was its representation of the respect the headmistresses and the high school communities felt in the early 1920s for Gurney's 45 years of work for the Trust, a respect which faded from view.

One other posthumous product of Gurney's work was her history of the Trust's high schools, published in 1921 in Pitman's *The encyclopaedia and dictionary of*

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<sup>2</sup> Inflation calculator

<sup>3</sup> GDS21/2/4



*education*.<sup>4</sup> At points in her career Gurney appears to have acted upon the historical instinct that she, with others, were part of a crucial phase in female education. Consequently, she and Amelia compiled the three albums of hundreds of press cuttings on 30 years of its growth across the world. Hence, her 1872 pamphlet included a history of Buss's Camden schools, and in 1912, 1907, and probably 1900 she chose to produce a booklet on the background to the existing Trust's schools. Therefore, it is not surprising that between 1915 and her death she wrote another summary of the GST's history for Pitman. Indeed, it can be argued that all her publications, if still read after her death, were small legacies to female education which helped preserve its history.

ii

Girton College

When probate was granted to Gurney's estate, which was mainly made up of shares in global companies and administered by stockbrokers in London, it was valued at just under £22,000, which was the equivalent in today's terms of about £1.25 million. She bequeathed the residue of her estate to GC, after bequests totalling £6,000 were distributed to relatives, servants, executors, the women's hospitals in Euston Road and Clapham Common in London, and the GST. There was a delay in the college receiving the money as her sister Amelia was given an interest in it until she died. Nevertheless, after 1923 GC received from Gurney's estate about £16,000. To this was added a sum from Amelia's own estate, making the total bequeathed about £23,000. In the years that followed another sum posthumously inherited by Gurney was also given to the college. In 1933 it was estimated that their bequests, together with their lifetime gifts,

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<sup>4</sup> GDS3/3/41 (16<sup>th</sup> June 1915); Gurney, M. 'The Girls' Public Day School Trust', Watson, F. (ed.), (1921) *The encyclopaedia and dictionary of education*, 2, London: Isaac Pitman and Sons, 719 - 721

amounted to ‘nearly £30,000’, which was the equivalent in today’s terms of about £2.2 million.<sup>5</sup>

In the present, this sum may seem an inconsequential one to any university college. However, to a younger and smaller GC of the 1930s it may have been of considerable use, especially as, apart from three stipulations, there was no restriction in the sisters’ wills on how the college used their money. All that Gurney requested in her will was that a three year scholarship for a student reading classics at GC, worth at least £60 per annum and granted ‘from time to time’, was created from income gained by the investment of a small amount of her financial bequest. In her will Amelia requested the same as well as seeking a three year postgraduate scholarship for a past or present GC student. Again, this third scholarship was to be worth £60 per annum and granted occasionally.<sup>6</sup>

## 2

### *Protégées: networking across generations*

#### i

##### Within a professional space

Although the end of Gurney’s career created a vacuum in the governance of the GST, it is possible to argue that she had at least three *protégées* who sought to fill some of it by maintaining her attitudes and style of working. They were an energetic group of professional women who belonged to her wide network. She facilitated and mentored their careers during her lifetime and they continued to work for the Trust in the 1920s and the 1930s. Their support for her educational ideals concerning gender, class, and race as well as their familiarity with her bureaucratic methods meant that Gurney was

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<sup>5</sup> Probate Registry; GCAR/2/6/38; Stephen, *Girton College*, 179 - 180; inflation calculator

<sup>6</sup> Probate Registry

able to maintain a degree of influence over the organisation for several decades after her death. In themselves, these *protégées* characterised other examples of Gurney's less important and more private legacies to education but they also assisted in the creation and perpetuation of her more significant public ones.

The first of them was Caroline Digby. She worked with Gurney on the GST's Council from 1897 to 1917 and on GC's governing body from 1906 until 1913. She also worked on the Trust's Education Committee under Gurney's chairmanship from at least 1902 to 1913. She then succeeded Gurney as that committee's chairman from 1914 until at least 1920 as well as remaining on the Council until 1925.<sup>7</sup> It was unlikely that Digby's promotion took place without Gurney's approval, given the founder's continuing power within the organisation. Their close professional and networked relationship spanned twenty years. Then Digby had the opportunity as a councillor to represent Gurney's views and protect her procedures for another eight years after her mentor's death.

The second of the acolytes was Edith Hastings.<sup>8</sup> She was headmistress of Nottingham High School from 1876 to 1880 and then headmistress of WHS from 1880 to 1908. In 1901 she led the creation of the GSC's 'Association of the Headmistresses'. After her retirement from teaching she became a member of the GST's Education Committee from 1909 to 1914, mostly under Gurney's chairmanship. Then she took up the position of HMI for the Board of Education before returning to the Education Committee in 1918 until at least 1934. She was also a member of the Teachers,

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<sup>7</sup> GCGB2/1/18 - 20 (27<sup>th</sup> March 1906 - 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1913); GDS6/3/1/3 - 6 (29<sup>th</sup> July 1902 - 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1920); GDS3/8/22

<sup>8</sup> For a copy of a photograph of Hastings see illustration 7.1 at the end of this chapter

Examinations, Finance, and Sites Committees until that year. In addition, she became a member of the Trust's Council from 1924 to 1935.

As a headmistress, Hastings was appointed as well as transferred by Gurney and they worked closely together in the creation and survival of the Wimbledon school. Indeed, one of Gurney's few recorded public speeches was made at the school in 1901, just months before Hastings was defended by her and the Council during the court case concerning classroom overcrowding. The influence of Gurney over Hastings' career was indicated by two other events. In 1891 the headmistress was on the local committee of the LSEUT centre in Wimbledon, a centre which Gurney worked to create and sustain from 1876. In 1904 Hastings allowed the inauguration of the Wimbledon branch of the VL to take place at the school, soon after Gurney joined the League in 1903. The professional and networked relationship this headmistress had with her employer became so attuned that, five years after Gurney's death, she wrote these brusque words in response to the suggestion that the Leaving Scholarship was awarded for more than just classics: 'If the known interest of Miss Gurney is to have weight, there should be no diverting...to modern subjects'. Hastings was closely involved in the creation of that scholarship by writing its appeal pamphlet. She was also the first of those who were approached by the GST Council to write Gurney's memorial.<sup>9</sup> Their relationship spanned 41 years and after 1917 Hastings had another eighteen years in which to defend Gurney's outlooks and practices from positions within the Trust.

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<sup>9</sup> GDS6/4/6 (14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1910); GDS6/3/1/4 (13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1909 - 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1914 and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1914); GDS6/3/1/6 (21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1917 and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1918 - 14<sup>th</sup> July 1920); GDS3/5; GDS12/25/10 Press cuttings, 1901 - 1917; GDS6/5/1/3 (20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1901); GDS21/2/4; GDS15/3/7; GDS3/8/44 Papers relating to Council member, E. Hastings; GPDSC/T/1 - 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1901 and 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918); EM1/12; VL report, 1904, 25

A first example of this defence occurred as soon as 1918. Hastings with Elizabeth Woodhouse, the third of these *protégées*, wrote that year's memorandum against a 25% intake of scholarship girls from elementary schools by the GST in return for the higher grant. A rate of intake Gurney had resisted for years. Woodhouse was headmistress of Sheffield High School from 1878 to 1898 and then headmistress of Clapham High School from 1898 to 1912.<sup>10</sup> In 1901, as a member of its inaugural Agenda Committee of three, she helped Hastings and Gadesden establish the headmistresses' Association at the GSC. She was also at one time president of the national Association of Headmistresses established by Buss in 1874. Two years after leaving the Clapham post she joined Gurney in the Education Committee and later she became a member of the Trust's Council. In 1917 she also became the secretary of the Gurney Memorial Scholarship Executive Committee. Outside of the Trust, from 1909 Woodhouse shared a platform with Gurney in the VL as an honorary councillor, an organisation Hastings had also supported. Her professional and networked relationship with her mentor of 39 years was almost as long as that of Hastings and she too gained vast policy-making and administrative experience from the employment and supervision which Gurney offered. Intriguingly, according to one source it was Woodhouse who argued against the idea that the GST's schools were known as Gurney schools instead of high schools. This may have been a protective response or one in which Woodhouse was only the messenger. Finally, when her work for the GST outlasted Gurney's work, she too had the chance to promote the older woman's legacies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a copy of a photograph of Woodhouse see illustration 7.2 at the end of this chapter

<sup>11</sup> GDS6/4/7 (8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1918) 314; GDS15/13/10 Papers relating to headmistress, E. Woodhouse; GDS3/8/109 Papers relating to Council member, E. Woodhouse; GDS21/2/4; VL report, 1909, 3; GPDSC/T/1 (2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1901); Paul, A. (1924) *Some memories of Mrs Woodhouse*, London: Silas Birch; Kamm, *Indicative past*, 121

It is worth noting that Ethel Gavin, who succeeded Hastings as headmistress of WHS in 1908, may have been cultivated as another of Gurney's particular allies. She worked for the GST from 1888: first as an assistant mistress at Maida Vale High School, then as headmistress at Shrewsbury High School from 1893 and NHBHS from 1900. Indeed, their connection began when Gavin was a pupil at the Company's school in Maida Vale, from which she won the Russell Gurney scholarship to GC.<sup>12</sup> Nearly a quarter of a century later she was placed on the short-list for the post of Lady Principal at CLC by the Selection Committee of which Gurney was a member. However, that example of sponsored mobility did not succeed in the face of competition and neither did Gavin's GST career lead to membership of its Council. Instead it was cut short by her death in 1918 at the age of 51. She did not have the chance to safeguard her mentor's legacies, unlike the other three *protégées*. Nevertheless, she was replaced at WHS until 1940 by Mabel Lewis, its former classics mistress and possibly one of the other candidates promoted by Gurney at CLC in 1907.

ii

Within a familial space

It is probable that Gurney's work also had a powerful influence on the education, training, and professional careers of at least four, if not five, close female relatives before and after 1917. Therefore, they may be regarded as more of her *protégées*, albeit of a different kind to those who took her work forward within the GST. They had less capacity to directly spread Gurney's attitudes and practices. Nevertheless, in their private manner they still characterised more of Gurney's minor educational legacies.

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<sup>12</sup> Sayers, 'Gavin'

Doctor Helen Mary Gurney was the daughter of Gurney's half-brother, Joseph John Gurney.<sup>13</sup> He became a mechanical engineer and settled in Newcastle upon Tyne. At one time he was chairman of the GSC's Newcastle High School, although in 1891 Helen attended the sixth form of the Company's Gateshead High School as the Newcastle school was not established until 1895. By 1911 she was a doctor of medicine, one of the only 447 females identified as such by the UK Census of that year, and by 1918 she was a medical registrar at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in her home city. She remained unmarried and in the 1910s lived there with her widowed mother and Gurney's half-sister Catherine. After Helen's death a trust was established for the benefit of nursing homes, using money from her estate. It is clear that Gurney was proud of this close relative's medical qualification. In her will she deliberately identified the qualification in the phrase 'my niece Helen Mary Gurney Doctor of Medicine' and her first bequest was the gift to Helen of some personal jewellery. It is hard to believe that Gurney did not mentor this academic relative or that Helen was not affected by Gurney's influence throughout the rest of her medical career.<sup>14</sup>

Emma Gurney Salter was the daughter of Gurney's cousin, William Henry Gurney Salter. She attended NHBHS and then read classics at GC from 1893 to 1896. She also wrote a Litt.D. thesis in 1912, before working for Admiralty Intelligence from 1915 to 1918, after which she became an editor and published writer. She also became a member of the BFSS's Council and for forty years she was manager of an LCC school.

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<sup>13</sup> For a copy of a photograph of Helen Gurney see illustration 7.3 at the end of this chapter

<sup>14</sup> Probate Registry; Carter, O. (1955?) *History of Gateshead High School 1876 - 1907 and Central Newcastle High School 1895 - 1955*, [London?]: GPDST, 24; Reader, *Professional men*, 182; Salter, *Histories of the Gurney family*

These last two occupations had a clear resonance with Gurney's own career and suggest Emma was also to a degree influenced by her elder relative.<sup>15</sup>

Winifred Mary Gurney-Smith was the daughter of another of Gurney's cousins, Alfred Gurney-Smith. She too attended GC, where she read medieval and modern languages from 1893 to 1897. She then became an assistant mistress at Sheffield High School and WHS as well as a member of the education committee in Bromley, just outside of London. Although she died in 1916, her career up to that date indicated a strong connection with Gurney's work and probably would have continued in that vein.<sup>16</sup>

Louisa Mary Gurney, daughter of Henry Palin Gurney who was principal of the Durham College of Science in Newcastle upon Tyne, may also have been a relative of Gurney. She attended NHBHS and went on to read mathematics at GC from 1892 to 1895. She was then awarded a Secondary Teachers' Cert. in 1896 and a B.Sc. from Durham University in 1898. She taught at the NLCS, before becoming a headmistress in Newcastle until at least 1934. As in the case of Emma and Winifred, Louisa was studying at GC when Gurney became a member of its governing body. If they were closely related, then again it is hard to believe that the older woman did not hold some sway over the direction of this younger woman's career, after as well as before 1917.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, Gurney's sister Amelia could be included in the category of *protégée*. From the 1860s to the 1890s she joined Gurney as a governor of the girls' department of the BFSS's school in Wandsworth and in the 1880s Amelia replaced her sister as a

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<sup>15</sup> Butler and McMorran, *GC Register*, 82

<sup>16</sup> Butler and McMorran, *GC Register*, 79

<sup>17</sup> Butler and McMorran, *GC Register*, 73; Garriock, J. 'L. M. Gurney', *ODNB*; Knight, D. 'H. P. Gurney', *ODNB*



member of the Froebel Society's governing committee. Also, she assisted Gurney with the attempt to record from newspapers and journals the development of female education from the 1870s to the 1900s as well as with some of her work for the GST. Although she was not a member, in 1914 Amelia was thanked by the GST's Education Committee for preparing 'as usual' the calendar of examinations from the headmistresses' 1913 reports. This work for the GST continued at least into 1919 when she was again making a summary of part of their annual reports for that committee. She also followed Gurney into the VL's Council in 1910, where she remained until her death in 1923. Therefore, for at least five years after 1917 she had the opportunity to continue to use Gurney's procedures and points of view within those two organisations. However, Amelia's strongest promotion of them was her acceptance of Gurney's bequests to GC and the replication of most of them in her own will.<sup>18</sup>

### 3

#### Public impact

##### i

#### Lasting effects of characteristics and patterns

It was estimated that between 1872 and 1972 about 135,000 girls received secondary education in the GST high schools.<sup>19</sup> Many thousands of those girls would have received it between Gurney's death and the end of that period. Many thousands more have received it in the almost half a century since it ended. The Trust's educational provision, mainly duplicating late Victorian secondary education in boys' public and grammar schools, aimed to be: academic in nature, focussed on public examinations, orientated towards university study, professional in delivery, closely networked, and

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<sup>18</sup> Davis, *History*, 15 - 31; NFF/1/1/2 (18<sup>th</sup> June - 17<sup>th</sup> December 1881); Gurney, albums; GDS6/3/1/5 (20<sup>th</sup> May 1914); GDS6/3/1/6 (5<sup>th</sup> March 1919); VL reports, 1901 - 1906; Probate Registry

<sup>19</sup> Sondheimer and Bodington, *The GPDST 1872 - 1972*, 29

under the control of a centralised bureaucracy independent from the English government. These characteristics, much developed by Gurney, remained as far as possible some of the GST's basic guidelines in the century after her death. Moreover, in the decades before and after the Great War the Trust's preferred type of educational provision created a leading template for full or partial use across Great Britain and British overseas territories. In particular, with the exception of independence from the state, the template was adopted by the Board of Education for its new grammar schools for girls. This modelling meant that Gurney's work for the high schools went on to affect not just thousands of GST pupils but millions of other girls. Her important legacies to female secondary education with their greater public face became vastly more national and transnational as the twentieth century passed.

In addition, during the interwar period and beyond, women's university study underwent growth in its permanency, provision, and academic recognition. This was due in part to Gurney's contribution to the earlier phase of this educational field's development. In London and Cambridge from the 1870s she sought and supervised the same three patterns of growth, albeit on a smaller scale. These dominant patterns were bequeathed to the future and went on to affect thousands of female university students after she died.

Moreover, after the Great War for the rest of the twentieth century, the growth in the training of women for careers inside teaching and outside of it, for instance in medicine and the law, was to an extent the result of an earlier model of female teacher training. Gurney helped to form that model's characteristics. While alive she encouraged post-university entrance and professionalism in its execution, key characteristics which greatly benefitted later generations of women seeking a diversity of formal careers. Indeed, it is possible to point to an example of how Gurney's work

furthered teacher training over 30 years after her death. Her work in the Edwardian period to establish that training in Clapham High School and in Streatham Hill and Brixton High School lead directly to the creation, after the Second World War, of the LCC's Philippa Fawcett Teacher Training College in London's Streatham.<sup>20</sup>

ii

Contemporary assessment

Gurney spoke of her work's more significant public effects, although she referred to them as the GSC's effects. In May 1894 Gurney and Stone presented their assessments of the Company's influence when they gave evidence to the Bryce Commission. Gurney argued: 'our schools have made a great difference in other girls' schools in the country...we have had a remarkable effect upon the education of girls throughout this country'. Stone highlighted that 'we have been the means of the same work being done by others' and 'they have taken all our methods very closely indeed [and]...frequently obtained their teachers and headmistresses from our schools...as we were first in the field'.<sup>21</sup> In the same vein, during 1912 members of the Finance Committee considered putting forward the argument that the survival of the GST high schools was essential as they, rather than the municipal girls' secondary schools, were the main providers of an education which would lead to university entrance. Their schools had 'led the march' as well as 'set the pace' and 'stimulated' those state schools.<sup>22</sup> Of course, given the context in which they spoke or wrote, these councillors felt the need to vigorously

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter 6.3.i

<sup>21</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 242, 253

<sup>22</sup> GDS6/4/6, (11<sup>th</sup> March 1912) Draft booklet, 214

defend their organisation's value as an administrative and educational model as well as a source of personnel. Nevertheless, others, in less defensive mode, voiced similar judgements on the Trust's effects and in doing so, also implicitly, gave their views on the significant public legacies of Gurney's career.

In the 1880s one of the Charity Commissioners, 'D. C. Richmond', felt that the growing Victorian acceptance of female education was in part due to the existence of the GSC's high schools.<sup>23</sup> In 1890 Fitch wrote that those high schools had raised the standard of girls' instruction and of female teacher training, as well as mixing the social classes. Twelve years later he argued that, through its creation of guidelines for girls' schooling, the Company had played a larger role in the improvement of female education than any single measure.<sup>24</sup> In addition, in 1896 New York GSC councillor Rose Kingsley argued that similar high schools to those of the Company were organised in Japan, India, and Australia.<sup>25</sup> Another expansive judgement was made in 1897. In a publication, which was prompted by the 1893 Chicago International Congress on Education, Christine Bremner wrote that the effect of the GSC 'was far-reaching' and 'upon private schools can hardly be exaggerated'.<sup>26</sup> Some final examples of contemporary assessments of the GST's impact were supplied by Gadesden and Magnus. On behalf of the Trust's headmistresses at their 1922 Golden Jubilee Annual Conference, she announced that 'the principles which have guided the educational administration of the Trust...have proved of great value in raising the

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<sup>23</sup> Fletcher, *Feminists and Bureaucrats*, 152

<sup>24</sup> Fitch, J. G. (1890) 'Women and the universities', *Contemporary Review*, 58, 240 - 255, 245, Hamilton and Schroeder, *Nineteenth-century British women's education*, 237 - 252; Fitch, J. G. (1902) 'Women and the universities', *Contemporary Review*, 84, 807 - 818, referred to in Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 201 - 202

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times* (1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1896) 9

<sup>26</sup> Bremner, C. (1897) *Education of girls and women in Great Britain*, London: Swan and Sonnenschein, xiii and 93 - 94

status and developing the efficiency of the teaching profession'.<sup>27</sup> In 1923 Magnus wrote of 'the great number of headmistresses who have been selected by outside bodies from our staffs'.<sup>28</sup>

More explicitly and with a striking perspective, in 1918 Magnus also made this claim: 'Particularly, the middle-class woman-worker is Miss Gurney's permanent contribution to the solution of the social problems of the coming era'.<sup>29</sup> This was a singular judgement which clearly identified a key legacy of Gurney's work and one which was bequeathed to the future of society, not just to that of female education. Therefore, this judgement stands in contrast to the other explicit assessments of her work, made between 1917 and 1924, because of its forward rather than backward vision. In contrast, they concentrated on what she achieved while alive.<sup>30</sup>

iii

#### Historical circumspection

However, even when they are contextualised, the repetition of similar contemporary views is not enough to prove the worth of an argument. More convincing statistical evidence is required, such as the document showing that half of 70 students listed in 1915 as trained in Clapham High School's department for art teachers, the training school which Gurney created and supervised, were by that year employed in schools other than Trust schools as far away as the Ladies College in Canada's Winnipeg.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, with regard to the GST's effects, some evidence was provided by Trust chroniclers and professional historians. However, still missing from all their

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Kamm, *Indicative past*, 86, 141

<sup>28</sup> Magnus, *The jubilee book*, 53

<sup>29</sup> Magnus, *Mary Gurney*, 16

<sup>30</sup> See chapter 1.4.i

<sup>31</sup> GDS17/4/3 (March 1915), 76

arguments was the explicit recognition that the Trust's effects were also the significant public legacies of Gurney's career. Magnus's 1918 unsubstantiated attempt at that recognition was not built upon.

For example, in 1971 Kamm identified 150 GST headmistresses who had gone on to run other schools by 1923, with the greatest number going to the new LEA girls' schools after 1902. Nevertheless, Kamm did not expand her analysis to say that Gurney's work played a part in this provision of suitable women. In 1980 Fletcher only named Gurney once in a footnote, despite acknowledging the importance of ex-GST headmistresses to the new endowed girls' schools created before 1902 and making use of Gurney's 1871 paper. Summerfield in 1987 and Goodman in 1997 also wrote of that importance without touching or expanding on Gurney's role in the process. In addition, neither Kamm or Sayers in the 1970s, nor Sutherland in 2015, brought Gurney into their analysis of why a second mistress of NHBHS was regarded as suitable for the BED post of first permanent female inspector of girls' secondary schools.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, as early as 1927 Mary Malim and Henrietta Escrett identified 28 assistant mistresses of Blackheath High School who went on to become principals or headmistresses, with two of them doing so in Peking and Antigua, although without discussing Gurney's involvement. For example, Edith Major was one of the 28 whose appointments and work were overseen by Gurney when Major became assistant mistress of Blackheath High School and then headmistress of East Putney High School

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<sup>32</sup> Kamm, *Indicative past*, 65, 100 - 126; Fletcher, *Feminists and Bureaucrats*, 102, footnote 57, 174; Sayers, *The fountain unsealed*, 126 - 127; Summerfield P. 'Women and the professional labour market 1900 - 1950: the case of the secondary school mistress', Summerfield, P. (ed.) (1987) *Women, education and the professions*, Leicester: History of Education Society occasional publication, 8, 37 - 52; Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction' 306; Sutherland, G. (2015) *In search of the new woman: middle-class women and work in Britain, 1870 - 1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31

in 1899, before becoming headmistress of King Edward VI Girls' High School in Birmingham and then Mistress of GC in 1925.<sup>33</sup> Continuing this history, in 1979 Ellsworth concluded that 22 of the 28 had the same mentor: the headmistress, Gadesden. This suggested a hot-house process at work in the school at Blackheath. Indeed, in 1972 Sondheimer, with Prunella Bodington, published a photograph of some of these women gathered together with Gadesden at the 1919 AHM Conference.<sup>34</sup> Again however, these historians did not highlight Gurney's key contribution to the creation of this supply-chain. It was Gurney, as a councillor and committee member, who oversaw the appointment of Gadesden as a Company assistant mistress in 1883, when she had finished her studies at GC, and who oversaw her appointment as a Company headmistress in 1886. After which, Gurney structured and supervised Gadesden's work in that post until 1917. It can also be argued that Gurney continued to do so posthumously through her *protégée* Digby, the next chairman of the Trust's Education Committee, until Gadesden retired in 1919.

Beyond employment and training, in 1974 Nonita Glenday and Mary Price demonstrated the importance of the Trust to the public reputation of professional headmistresses, although without identifying Gurney's place in that development. For example, until 1919 very nearly 40% of its presidents were serving headmistresses of Trust schools as were nearly 50% of the successive chairmen of its governing committee. Woodhouse and Gadesden were two of the former. Moreover, just over 50% of its vice-presidents were headmistresses of Company schools when the position existed between 1878 and 1895.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in the 1980s Howarth and Bryant wrote

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<sup>33</sup> Malim, M. and Escreet, H. (eds.), (1927) *The book of the Blackheath High School*, London: The Blackheath Press, appendix 1a

<sup>34</sup> Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 201; Sondheimer and Bodington, *The GPDST 1872 - 1972*, 15, 36, 80

<sup>35</sup> Glenday, and Price, *Reluctant revolutionaries*, appendix 2

about the Trust's effect on the academic growth of female university colleges. Howarth used the 1909 *Guardian* survey and the 1910 - 1911 *Girls' School Year Book* to show the GST's provision of students to women's colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. Bryant even used Gurney's 1894 statistical evidence to the Bryce Commission on that subject. However, neither historian examined its author's impact on that growth.<sup>36</sup>

In the same decade, Dyhouse and Pedersen saw all the reformed schools for girls of the late nineteenth century as a new reference group and as a vanguard. The Endowed Schools Commission from 1869 to 1874 and then the Charity Commission until 1902 created 94 more of them in the same period as the Company created their 38 high schools. Despite this difference in numbers, the GSC schools were a uniquely influential part of that vanguard because, due to Gurney's centralised policy-making and administration, they formed the largest entity within the new reference group.<sup>37</sup> An even wider and deeper perspective was used by McCulloch in 2015. He argued that English state secondary education provided since the Second World War has historical roots that can be traced back to the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> English independent secondary education also has a deep basis and the two sectors' origins were interlinked. Before and after 1917 Gurney's work made a significant contribution to the development of English secondary education for girls within both the independent and state sectors. Indeed, up to the present in both sectors, the legacies of her career

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<sup>36</sup> Howarth, J. (1985) 'Public schools, safety-nets and educational ladders: the classification of girls' secondary schools, 1880 - 1914', *Oxford Review of Education*, 2, 59 - 69; Bryant, *The London experience*, 333

<sup>37</sup> Dyhouse, *Girls growing up*, 183; Pedersen, *The reform of girls' secondary and higher education*, 37

<sup>38</sup> McCulloch, 'A footnote to Plato', 882 - 883



have played a part in the formation of all levels of female education and training on a national and transnational basis.

### Conclusion

However, some qualifications must be applied to Gurney's public legacies. Her career's impact on the education of later generations of working-class women and girls as well as females without a European heritage was far less than on the education of future middle and upper-class females with such a heritage. A belief in gender equality did not eliminate all class, race, and ethnic discrimination within Gurney's career and its existence also went on to affect her legacies up to the present. Furthermore, just as the effects of her work after 1917 were not equitable, neither were her legacies unique. The careers of other educationalists, many of whom were members of her network and a few of whom may be classified as her *protégées*, contributed to the same future educational characteristics and patterns as Gurney's work managed to do. Indeed, Gurney's networking was essential to the power of her legacies.

Moreover, none of the careers of these women and men, including that of Gurney, would have had the same impact on the education of later generations of females without the assistance of fundamental changes in social, economic, and political perspectives and structures within their society. For example, the twentieth century's growth in the acceptance of state intervention or the two world wars' alterations in the female labour market were necessary changes. Thus, the 1944 Education Act, also known as the Butler Act, contributed to the continued survival of the Trust's high schools in the third quarter of the twentieth century through its direct grant scheme. For a time this scheme worked alongside the strong traditions inherited from Gurney's and her colleagues' work, although by the 1980s the Trust had reverted to far greater independence from the state. From 1980 to 1997 it only used the state's assisted places

scheme and now it pursues full independence for 23 of its 25 schools.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the lasting effects of Gurney's work should not be viewed in isolation from their context. Nevertheless, it is still possible to judge her work's level of importance to the development of female education after her death. As in the case of the career itself, its legacies were significant.

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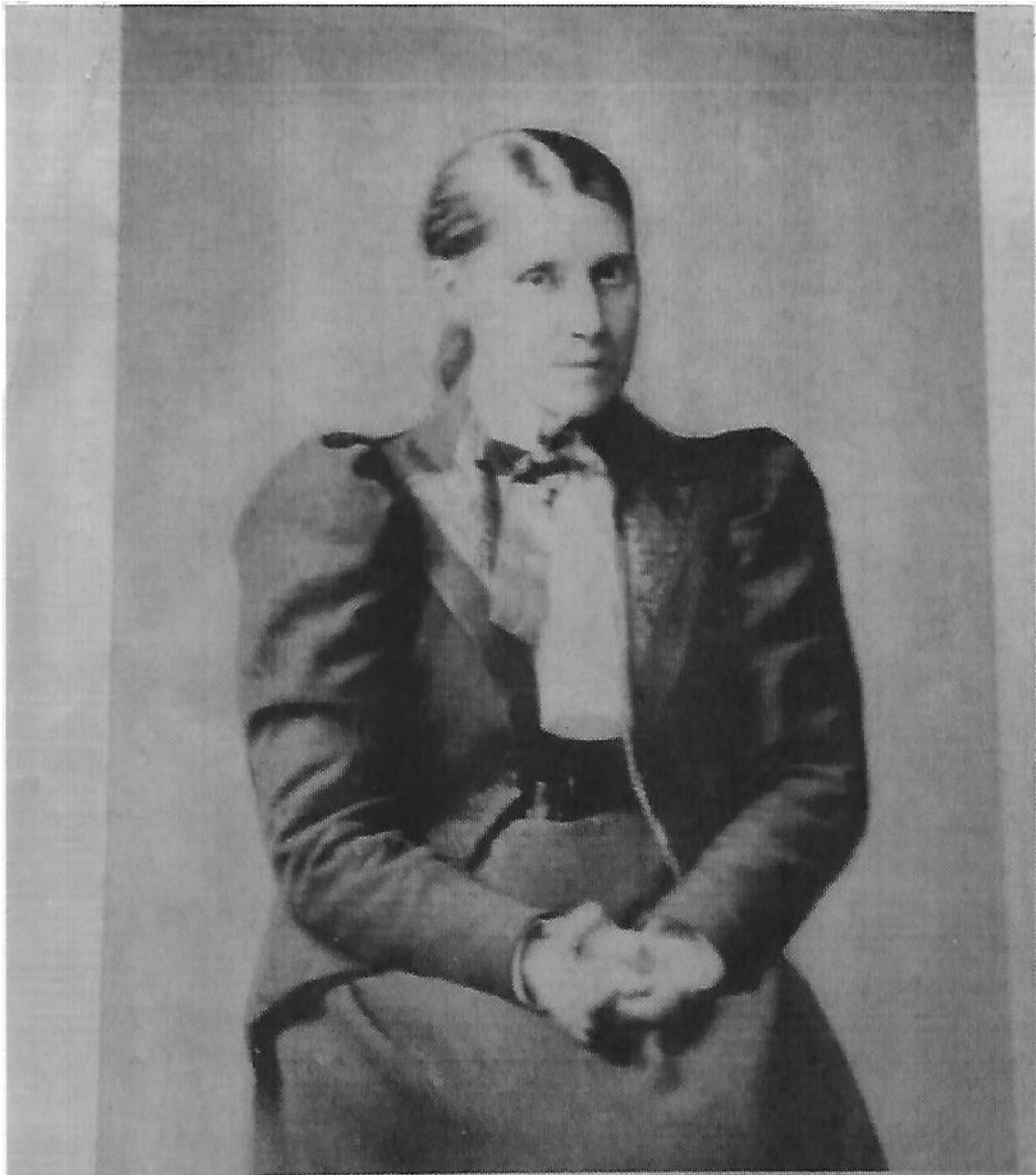
<sup>39</sup> [www.gst.net](http://www.gst.net) (last accessed June 2020)

Illus. 7.1: *Photograph of E. Hastings*



Anon., (1954?) *Girls' Public Day School Trust, Nottingham High School for Girls*  
1875 - 1954, [London?]: [GPDST?], 9

Illus. 7.2: *Photograph of E. Woodhouse*



MRS. WOODHOUSE, about 1898.  
taken from a group photograph lent by Sheffield High School.  
Headmistress of Sheffield High School, 1878 - 1898,  
Clapham High School, 1898 - 1912

GDS15/13/10 Papers relating to headmistress, E. Woodhouse

Illus. 7.3: Photograph of Doctor H. Gurney before her medical training



SIXTH FORM 1891  
STANDING (left to right): Ethel Cunningham, a Maggie Hedder (Mrs. Hughes), a Ann F. Davies,  
SITTING (left to right): a Beatrice Glass (Mrs. A. G. Fraser), (Helen) May Gurney, Hilda Blackman (Mrs. Howard)  
a Margaret Temperley, a Miss Mason, a Ethel Sulston (Mrs. Fox)  
a Member of G.H.S. Guild, and alive in 1985.

ri.  
Gurney (1890s) before qualifying as a medical doctor, seated second from left

Carter, O. (1955?) *History of Gateshead High School 1876 - 1907 and Central Newcastle High School 1895 - 1955*, [London?]: GPDST

Chapter eight: Mary Gurney's significance

## Introduction

The rationale of the thesis is to recover Gurney's work and thereby answer the question: how far and in what ways did she make a contribution to English female education? The answer given in summary here, and in detail from chapter three to seven, is that Gurney's remarkable career and its legacies in many ways made a significant contribution to the development and survival of that education. In England she was a leading educationalist not just of the long nineteenth century, but of the century after it ended. The historical record is revised by this important recovery. Also, it is altered in less important ways by the thesis. Some educational institutions' histories are rebalanced. Smaller parts of other educationalists' careers are also recovered. New measurements of a Victorian and Edwardian network are produced. Some more depth is added to several perspectives on women's past educational provision reached through the lens of feminism. Discussion of these less fundamental and more unexpected correctives is concluded in this chapter. In addition, conclusions are made about the recovery of Gurney's career and its legacies, especially on its implications for future research. However, this chapter emphasises the historical impact of her work by making that, rather than the thesis' historiographical impact, the final focus. This is vital to the consolidation of Gurney's place within historical understanding.

## Unplanned revisions

### i

## Rebalance and remedy

In particular the institutional histories of the GST, GC, and CLC are rebalanced by the recovery of Gurney's career and its legacies. Remarkably, in the first years after her death the Trust's decision-makers and chroniclers failed, for a variety of reasons, to publicly record in detail her 45 years of GST leadership and its effects.<sup>1</sup> This was not rectified in the following decades, instead it was compounded as her full significance was lost sight of rather than recognised and analysed. Consequently, up until now the Trust has had an inadequate history. In contrast, GC's history was less out of kilter. Although Gurney's role in that institution's survival was neglected in published records and public memorials, she was not as vital to its survival as she was to the GST's creation and continuation. Nevertheless, Gurney's leadership of 23 years within its governing body alongside Davies and Fitch, the role of her work as a steady source of undergraduates to the College, and her and her sister's contribution to GC's future through their considerable financial bequests, suggested that the account of its past still needed some supplementing. CLC's record of Gurney's contribution to its development was similarly lacking in weight. Gurney was an important support to Beale's leadership for over 32 years and with Fitch she played a part in the College's modernisation from a local to a national public school for girls, yet there was still room in the 2020s for the recovery of Gurney's career and legacies to fit into a more rounded account of CLC's history.

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<sup>1</sup> See chapters 2.1.ii and 7.3.ii

On a different note, in the process of recovering Gurney's work the careers of more than a hundred members of her educational network underwent varying amounts of further investigation. Of course, these minor recoveries do not equal that of her work in terms of historiographical impact. Nevertheless, some greater understanding is now available for example about the careers of three of Gurney's *protégées*, none of whom have entries in the *ODNB*. The influence of Gurney over Digby's, Hastings', and Woodhouse's educational leadership is clearer. Also, in terms of remedying omissions, some of Garrett Fawcett's efforts for female education are explored using the umbrella of her working relationship with Gurney. This aspect of Fawcett's activities was relatively neglected in her *ODNB* entry.<sup>2</sup>

Similar efforts by important men in Gurney's network experienced the same pattern of neglect in their *ODNB* entries. Those for Kay-Shuttleworth, Bryce, Shaen, Bartley, Galton, Barry, and Lyttelton only provided brief sentences about their work for female education. The first four's involvement in the GST was completely neglected, as was the last two's involvement in the WEU. Moreover, the entries for Henry Austin Bruce and John Farmer had no mention of their work for either organisation. This historiographical pattern also affected the mid-twentieth century's written commemorations of the various GST schools' jubilees: the male founders lacked appropriate recognition. A much earlier example of such neglect was noticed by Davies in 1903. She complained in a letter to the *Times* that its obituary for Fitch left out adequate detail of his work for female education.<sup>3</sup> This thesis begins to remedy the neglect of such work by those particular ten men.

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<sup>2</sup> Howarth, 'Fawcett'

<sup>3</sup> *Times* (15<sup>th</sup> July 1903), Robertson, 'Fitch'



## Measurement and addition

Examples and analysis of Gurney's network and networking opportunities are provided in the chapters. As further measurement of their density and intensity patterns, the thesis also includes table 4.1 and fig. 4.1. The table and figure only use information which can be found elsewhere in the chapters but they do offer a different perspective. Of more importance, before the production of this thesis measurement of density and intensity patterns was difficult to apply to the little that was known about Gurney's network and networking. As a result of its production, it is now clear that some parts of Gurney's network of relational and spatial links possessed considerable density and intensity and that those two elements were particularly crucial in the formation, type, diversity, speed, reach, and limits of her career. Therefore, as part of a wider trend in educational historiography, this thesis adds new examples to the measurement of education's informal as well as formal connections.

Again, while there is no new information in them, maps 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 show from a different perspective the sites, buildings, and travel-paths associated with Gurney's educational work. In doing so, they too demonstrate the relative density of some of her networked spaces. In addition, the family trees provided in tables 3.1 and 3.2, which re-identify the relative links between Gurney and her family members, allow a quick assessment of the comparative intensity of some of the blood and legal relationships which offered support to her career. Lastly, comparative statistics on the attendance rates of Gurney and other councillors at governing body meetings, taken from chapters, are shown together in table 6.1. It also illustrates the element of intensity within Gurney's exercise of networked power across professional spaces.

Therefore, this thesis adds further new examples to the measurement of education's informal connections.

The final and unexpected revision of educational historiography concerns several feminist perspectives. The recovery of Gurney's career adds some additional depth to them. In 1997 Goodman discussed the tendency for Victorian women to be overshadowed by men in mixed-sex professional meetings.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Gurney appears to have needed to push against that tendency when giving evidence to the Bryce Commission. Nevertheless, the examination of Gurney's dominance in meetings when chairman of the GST's Education Committee, Examinations and Studies Committee, and Teachers Committee also suggests that late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century females were not always overshadowed by men when conducting their professional business.<sup>5</sup>

In 1987, 1997, and 2000 the growth of male-orientated bureaucracy was seen by Hunt, Goodman, and Harrop as a hindrance to the development of female authority within Victorian and Edwardian education.<sup>6</sup> Gurney's work indicated that her exercise of power was not overwhelmingly affected by that tendency. It appears she gained more rather than less experience from working within masculine structures. When her power was hidebound or potentially lessened by their growth, she responded with resistant strategies. In 1872 she altered the focus of her work from the well-established BFSS to the new and initially less formalised GSC.<sup>7</sup> In 1877 and 1897 she managed

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<sup>4</sup> Goodman, 'Constructing contradiction', 294 - 295

<sup>5</sup> For evidence of Gurney's exercise of power in professional meetings see chapter 4.4 - 5 and chapter 6.2 - 4

<sup>6</sup> Hunt, 'Divided aims', 8 - 12, footnotes 20, 41; Goodman, 'Women governors', 30 - 31; Goodman, 'Women school board members', 73; Goodman and Harrop, 'The peculiar preserve', 141 - 143; Goodman, 'Constructing contradictions'

<sup>7</sup> GDS6/3/1/1 (19<sup>th</sup> June 1872) 1; *Freeman's Journal* (23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1872) Dublin

to preserve and increase her power within the GSC by successfully opposing others' proposed structural changes.<sup>8</sup> In the 1900s she manoeuvred around the Board of Education's increasingly bureaucratic interference in the running of the GST.<sup>9</sup> Her professionalism and networking, rather than being slowed, mostly avoided threats to her authority once it was acquired. In contrast, she also developed the Trust's bureaucracy when that could increase the power she held. However, in that process she developed systems which did to an extent hold back the authority of other of its female staff, particularly that of the GST's headmistresses.<sup>10</sup> There was a degree of ruthlessness in her governance. Gurney was a forceful innovator who did not always find the growth in male-orientated bureaucracy a hindrance. For her it was also, depending on the context, an opportunity to develop her skills and the range of her feminine public sphere. Of course, Gurney's career may have been exceptional in these respects. Despite that, an understanding of her work adds a little more complexity to these two feminist interpretations of education's history. As Bryant and Goodman argued theories need constant testing using empirical evidence, consequently they may need some revision.<sup>11</sup>

## 2

### Recovering Gurney's work

#### i

##### The key revision

The recovery of Gurney's career and its legacies is the most important of the revisions to historiography made by the thesis. It fills a considerable gap in the account of

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<sup>8</sup> GDS3/3/2 (27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1877) 297 - 298; GDS3/2/4 and 6 (4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1897)

<sup>9</sup> For evidence of Gurney resisting the Board's increasingly bureaucratic interference see chapter 6.3.i

<sup>10</sup> For evidence of Gurney using bureaucratisation to enhance her power see chapter 4.4.iv and chapter 6.2.ii

<sup>11</sup> Bryant, *The unexpected revolution*, 116; Goodman, 'Troubling histories', 157 - 158

educational provision by women of the past. Across chapter three to seven, the recovery corrects and extends the account by raising the historical profile of Gurney's work to the level of more known reformers. Garrett Fawcett's judgement that Gurney was equal as an educational leader to Davies, Grey, Henry Sidgwick, and herself is vindicated.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, by acting as a base, this important revision encourages further research into the neglected work of other educationalists. For example, it may be possible to establish greater understanding about Hastings' career of 60 years as a GST headmistress, councillor, and HMI.<sup>13</sup> Up to the present there is no such detailed study. Another research opportunity surrounds Fitch. His distinctive work as an SIC and ESC assistant commissioner, HMI, senator of London University, and principal of the BFSS's innovatory Borough Road College has received attention from historians.<sup>14</sup> However, at the moment, there is no study which concentrates solely on his considerable support for female education. Until his death in 1903, this support brought him into a working relationship with Gurney at the LEA, the LSEUT, CLC, the PHC, and GC among other enterprises.<sup>15</sup> In addition, his wife Emma Wilks Fitch, whose birth around 1832 made her a more exact contemporary of Gurney, was another feminist whose work requires far more coverage than simply a mention at the end of Fitch's *ODNB* entry.

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<sup>12</sup> Fawcett, *What I remember*, 117 - 118

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 7.2.i

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, 'Fitch'; Robson, G. (2002) 'The churches, the Bible and the child: Sir Joshua Fitch and religious education in the English elementary school 1860-1902', *History of Education Society Bulletin*, 69, 17 - 25; Robertson, A. (1980) *Sir Joshua Girling Fitch, 1824 - 1903: a study in the formation of English educational opinion*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne; Robertson, A. (1971) 'J. G. Fitch and the origins of the liberal movement in education, 1863 - 1970', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 3, 2, 9 - 14

<sup>15</sup> See chapter 5.1.ii - iii and 5.2.ii - iii; Scott, *What is secondary education?*

## Historical significance

However, the final focus should be on Gurney's work in history, rather than on its presence within historical writing, especially as it continued to affect education across the twentieth century.

Between 1872 and 1917 Gurney played a vital role in the creation and maintenance of 38 innovative GST schools for girls which educated thousands of girls and trained hundreds of women teachers. The 37 high schools among them became equal to the first tier of existing boys' secondary schools by providing access to a university education. She did this as a founding member of the Trust's Council and of its five leading committees. Moreover, from the 1890s until the 1910s she was chairman of three of those committees. Indeed, by 1894 Gurney's standing in the Company was such that she became its only other witness before the SEC, apart from its Council's second chairman. It can also be argued that Gurney, mainly through her GST work, was a Victorian and Edwardian school governor of almost unique experience in the selection and retention of headmistresses.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, during her wider career from 1862 to 1917 Gurney had an impact on the education and training of additional thousands of women and girls. She was a founding member of the WEU's Central Committee. She had an important role in the development of three female colleges which provided higher and secondary education: GC, CLC, and the PHC. She worked for the FS's provision of education in kindergartens, the BFSS's spread of elementary education, and the LSEUT's supply

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<sup>16</sup> See chapters 4 and 6

of women's extra-mural higher education. Furthermore, she worked for the VL, the RDS, the HAIA, the NSEA, the DEC, and the FTCC, she was involved in the TTRS's ambitions for female teachers, and she promoted the interests of a German college for women. Alongside this, early in her career she was on the LEA's Executive Committee which sought the award of London University degrees to women and later she joined a committee which created scholarships for women to study in the USA as well as involving herself in three other campaigns: that of the AEW for the award of Oxford and Cambridge University degrees to women, the campaign against a university only for women, and Garrett Fawcett's campaign for female suffrage. Lastly, during her career she wrote books, pamphlets, and articles on education, some of which involved translation from German, and she travelled to the European continent for professional purposes.<sup>17</sup>

At a simple level it can be argued that, from 1917 up to the present, the public legacies of Gurney's career have affected female education and training through the continuing use of Froebel's ideas and the survival of the GST, GC, CLC, and the PHC. As well, male education in England is now linked to her work through GC's 1976 decision to become a mixed-sex college, just as it still is through the on-going work of the VL and the BFSS across continents. However, in parallel, a more complex argument can be made about her career and its public legacies.

Before and after 1917, Gurney's policy-making and administration helped create, nurture, and expand a model of secondary education and one of centralised bureaucracy for that education. Across the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, in England and other areas of the world, these models eventually affected the

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<sup>17</sup> See chapter 5

education of millions of females who attended different institutions from those she founded and sustained. Indeed, the Trust with its remaining 22 high schools, one preparatory school, and two academies still offers those models to other private and public institutions as well as still using them as a base for its own work.

Gurney's legacies also contributed to the dominant patterns which underpinned the growth of female university study during the rest of the twentieth century. By 2020 this growth resulted in women in the UK forming about 57% of higher education students. In addition, her legacies in part formulated post-graduate and professionalised training for women in teaching which, in turn, provided an exemplar for training in the law, medicine, and other fields of professional work in the inter-war period and beyond. Thus, in the UK at present about 74% of those in higher education studying education are women, while about 49% of qualified solicitors, about 45% of qualified doctors, and about 42% of senior civil servants are women.<sup>18</sup> In fact, after 1945 it would not have been inappropriate to add Gurney's name to that of the LCC's Philippa Fawcett Teachers Training College given her role in its creation, any more than it would have been inappropriate to start identifying the GST's schools as Gurney schools.<sup>19</sup>

Fitch and Magnus wrote about what they believed was the impact of her work on society as well as on education. In 1890 Fitch did so indirectly through the impact of the Trust's high schools, which he felt mixed the social classes. In 1918 Magnus was far more direct about her work's permanent contribution to English society. He felt it had supplied and would supply in the future vital middle-class female workers. The

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter 7.3.i; *GDST Annual Review 2015*; Verve, *GDST alumnae network magazine*, issue 15/16; [www.gst.net/](http://www.gst.net/); [www.hesa.ac.uk/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/); [www.sra.org.uk/](http://www.sra.org.uk/); [www.medicalwomenfederation.org.uk/](http://www.medicalwomenfederation.org.uk/); [www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/](http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/) (all sites last accessed June 2020)

<sup>19</sup> See chapters 6.3.i, 2.1.ii, and 7.2.i

statistics about professional women's employment in England today indicate her work's continuing impact. However, the resistance by Gurney and others to the raising of the number of elementary school scholars entering the Trust's schools suggests that Fitch, if he meant more than a mixing of middle-class parts of society, was less accurate than Magnus in his judgement.<sup>20</sup>

This observation on Fitch's judgement connects to wider conclusions on the limitations of Gurney's career and its legacies. Their impact was not fully equitable, nor unique, nor always powerful. She sought to end gender discrimination in education. However, apart from her BFSS work in Wandsworth for white and English working-class girls, her work was almost exclusively for white and English middle-class females. Also, while her networking gave her professional roles much of their capacity to break and cross boundaries, networking did not always assist her to do so. Moreover, social, economic, and political factors, beyond the control of individuals such as Gurney and her colleagues, were also responsible for developments in female education across the last 200 years.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, it is possible to argue that while she was alive her work was limited in scope because there was only so much she could do, given the scale of the task simply concerning white and English middle-class female education. It is also possible to argue that she was a pragmatist who knew that without endowments or state grants, provision of secondary and tertiary education and training was even more difficult, if not impossible, to provide for working-class females, whatever their race and ethnicity. As to her rarely addressing the needs of male education, the same two

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<sup>20</sup> For Fitch's and Magnus' judgements see chapter 7.3.ii; for Gurney's resistance see chapter 6.3.i and 6.4.ii

<sup>21</sup> See chapters 6 and 7, conclusions



arguments about scale and pragmatism can apply. In addition, she clearly stated in the early 1870s that she felt the education of middle-class men and boys already had enough support from existing endowments and scholarships.<sup>22</sup> Her main contact with male education, apart from through the BFSS, LSEUT and the VL, was to use it as an exemplar, however much it too needed reform of a different sort.

Moreover, it is important to remember the context in which she worked. Gurney was a product of her family and society. Her relatives may have bequeathed to her examples of challenging behaviour, as some had worked against slavery as well as for prison and educational reform, but neither she nor they were revolutionaries working to change the fundamental structures of their society. Indeed, they were able to finance their work for reform because they were capitalist bankers and business owners within a British empire with strong class, race, and ethnic divisions. Any view on Gurney's approach to change needs be judged from more than the present's perspective. Her networked and feminist borderland space would have been different, as well as similar, to those of generations of reformers who followed her. Indeed, across her working life that feminine public sphere would also have altered. Nevertheless, within that evolving educational landscape her work's impact on its gendered divisions was significant.

### Conclusion

Gurney would probably not have been too dismayed that her career came to be neglected by historians, nor particularly satisfied that it came to be recovered. Her focus was other females' education, not auto/biography. She was a shadowy bureaucrat as well as a leader within the feminine public sphere. Her method was to

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter 4.2.i - ii

work as part of a network. Nevertheless, although she could not fully understand the significance of her work and its legacies to the history of female education after her death and it is likely she would have been critical of some of the turns that history took, she had enough historical sensibility to see that her career was part of a crucial phase in the reform of female education. This awareness encouraged her to take advantage of the weakening by social, economic and political forces of the boundaries imposed upon women and girls in her society and to forcefully question the educational settlement through words and action. Indeed, one of the questions she asked in a formal public meeting began: 'May I be allowed to say a word'.<sup>23</sup> That simple but powerful request, the tone of which may have been polite but loaded with frustration, makes it appropriate that some of the words Mary Gurney used when she was allowed to speak on that occasion are the last words of this study.

I think there is something to be said with regard to the prestige that we have now in the provision of girls' education...It is not for us to say whether other people could do the same, but we have had a remarkable effect upon the education of girls throughout this country.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> BPP, SEC (9<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 176

<sup>24</sup> BPP, SEC (29<sup>th</sup> May 1894) 253

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