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**SAVING THE CHILDREN OF SHOREDITCH:  
LADY CYNTHIA COLVILLE AND NEEDY FAMILIES IN EAST LONDON, C.1900-  
1960**

**Kate Bradley<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

This article approaches the question of the 'child at risk' through the case of an elite individual who became involved in infant welfare and the juvenile courts: Lady Cynthia Colville. Colville entered into voluntary social work as an activity 'appropriate' for a woman of her standing. With her appointment as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary, the already very well-connected Colville had unrivalled access to the Royal Household for promoting the interests of her charities. The case of Colville provides a point of intersection for the historiographies on gender, class, welfare, and crime, and fresh insight into the relationship between 'innovation' in social work and the established social order.

**Keywords:** social work, juvenile delinquency, infant welfare, England, London, Shoreditch, social reform, class, elites, voluntary work, families, children and young people, royal family

**Introduction**

'The child at risk' was, in many ways, a construction of nineteenth-century reformers, philanthropists and commentators. As the industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain gathered pace, working-class childhood increasingly seemed at odds with the portrayal of childhood as a time of precious innocence, especially as portrayed by the Romantic Movement. There was a coalescence of ideas and practice around the 'special' nature of childhood that needed to be protected, through restricting children's work, increasing access to education, and providing appropriate moral guidance.<sup>2</sup> The child at risk, therefore, was a

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); Lloyd de Mause, *The History of Childhood: The Evolution of Parent-Child Relationships as a Factor in History*, (London: Souvenir, 1980); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, (London: Longman, 1995); George Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and Its Guardians*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare:*

working-class child, who were very obviously present on the streets of British towns and cities, playing and getting into trouble without (apparent) adult supervision.<sup>3</sup> Upper-class and many middle-class children had a very different experience, one that took place within the world of the home, being brought up in nurseries by nannies before being sent to boarding school or having a governess. This was a childhood devoid of the need to work to support the family and without the risks of the street, but one that was potentially lonely and lacking in intimacy with one's parents.<sup>4</sup> The privileged parenting of the middle and upper classes conformed to these prevailing ideas about the sanctity of childhood, and also provided space for elite women to undertake voluntary work, often with working-class children and their mothers.<sup>5</sup>

From the 1840s, working-class children on the streets were a problem to be dealt with through the institution, which took them off the streets and placed them within 'homes' or 'schools'. Reformatory and industrial schools, as well as the homes run by various charities, aimed to train the young in a trade and give them a sufficient moral footing, supposedly the better to stop them falling into crime as adults.<sup>6</sup> Children and young people could also experience ad hoc summary justice on the streets by police officers who might strike them, or, if found guilty, the possibilities of fines, corporal punishment and being sent to an adult prison.<sup>7</sup> The rise of the social sciences in the second half of the century gradually created a consensus of understanding that poverty and crime were not caused by personal moral failings, but were fuelled by structural forces and inequalities – a forerunner of the sociological and economic

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England 1872 - 1989, (London: Routledge, 1994); Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> See Louise Jackson, 'Children of the Streets: Rescue, Reform and the Family in Leeds, 1850-1914', *Family and Community History*, 3 (2000), 135-145

<sup>4</sup> See Jane Hamlett, "'White-Painted Fortresses'? English Upper- and Middle-Class Nurseries, 1850-1910', *Home Cultures*, 10 (2013), 245-66; Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1815-1910*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Anne Summers, 'A Home from Home: Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century', in Sandra Burman (ed), *Fit Work for Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 33-63, p.38.

<sup>6</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare*.

<sup>7</sup> Jerry White, 'Police and People in London in the 1930s', *Oral History*, 11 (1983), 34-41 specifically refers to the 1930s, but as a well-established practice; see also Leon Radzinowicz and Roger Hood, *The Emergence of Penal Policy in Victorian and Edwardian England*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), especially chapter 19.

concept of ‘welfare risks’.<sup>8</sup> This view came to be aligned particularly, but not exclusively, with Liberal and Labour politics in Britain. Whilst inequalities were identified, the emphasis was on using taxation for collective approaches to welfare, rather than radically shaking up the class system and redistributing wealth in that way.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the social science and medical disciplines of psychology and psychiatry were tools for looking at the troubles of the individual, finding their causes in early childhood, and providing a means of correcting them in the present for the benefit of the future.<sup>10</sup> With the administrative turn in justice – reducing the number of types of crime that could be taken to trial in favour of swifter treatment in the magistrates’ courts – these processes combined to allow a space in which the welfare and justice systems for the young were intertwined.<sup>11</sup> This welfare-justice system – ‘penal welfarism’, as Garland has described it – was a space dominated by professionals, many of whom were middle- and upper-class women seeking to carve out a public role for themselves.<sup>12</sup>

This article seeks to explore these processes through the case study of one elite woman, Lady Cynthia Colville, voluntary social worker, juvenile court magistrate and Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Mary. Colville was a major figure in the development of juvenile justice and welfare in the first half of the twentieth century, and through her, a number of fresh insights can be gained into the processes mentioned above. First, it is important to consider the extent to which these ‘modern’ processes of ‘child saving’ were rooted in older British traditions of philanthropy, civil

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<sup>8</sup> See Standish Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform 1880 - 1914: The Search for Community*, (New Haven: Yale, 1981), especially 80-96.

<sup>9</sup> See Jose Harris, “‘Big Society’ and ‘Great Society’: a problem in the history of ideas”, in Armine Ishkanian and Simon Szreter (eds.), *The Big Society Debate: A New Agenda for Social Welfare?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2012), pp.27-38, p.30-31; James Thompson, ‘Political economy, the labour movement and the minimum wage’, in E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner (eds.), *The Strange Survival of Liberal England: Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.62-88, pp.62-66.

<sup>10</sup> George Renton, ‘The East London Child Guidance Clinic’, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 19 (1978), 309-11; William Llewellyn Parry Jones, ‘The History of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Its Present Day Relevance’, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 30 (1989), 3-11.

<sup>11</sup> Leon Radzinowicz and Roger Hood, *The Emergence of Penal Policy in Victorian and Edwardian England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, (London: Routledge, 1993).

society and paternalism, and the public role of women.<sup>13</sup> Second, there are questions to be raised about the role of elites and access to influence in this period. Finally, there is a need to know about the ways in which new technologies and sciences –were harnessed and used in the quest to help the ‘child at risk’. Through studying Colville as an individual, relatively little is learnt about the lived experience of being a ‘child at risk’ in Shoreditch, the area in London where she undertook her social work. What we uncover instead is her perception of the ‘child at risk’, and the context in which that child lived. This mediated perception of a Shoreditch childhood was used by Colville as the basis of her expertise in child welfare and justice. It was the understanding of deprived childhood that informed her conversations with Queen Mary and other members of the elite, her broadcasts, publications and correspondence with the press.

### **Lady Cynthia Colville**

Lady Helen Cynthia Crewe-Milnes was born on 20 May 1884 into the aristocracy. Her father, Robert Milnes, was a prominent Liberal politician.<sup>14</sup> Shortly after Colville’s birth, her grandfather’s death in 1885 elevated her father to the House of Lords. He served as a Liberal whip and a lord-in-waiting for a brief period between January 1886 and September 1887, when the death of his wife, Colville’s mother, led to him leaving politics for a time.<sup>15</sup> Lord Houghton, as he was known by that point, returned to politics in 1892 when he was appointed the Lord

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<sup>13</sup> Recent work on juvenile delinquency in Ireland has shown by comparison just how ‘British’ these trends to adopting social scientific explanations were. Ireland shared the same legislative framework from the Children Act 1908 until 1922, when it became independent. The Irish experience was subsequently dominated by Catholic religious organisations and Catholic social theory. See Paul Sargent, *Wild Arabs and Savages: A History of Juvenile Justice in Ireland*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan, *Adolescence in Modern Irish History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). For the broader, transnational ways in which juvenile delinquency was conceived and responded to, see Heather Ellis, *Juvenile Delinquency and the Limits of Western Influence, 1850-2000*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> K. D. Reynolds, ‘Colville [Nee Crewe-Milnes] Lady (Helen) Cynthia (1884-1968)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> John Davis, ‘Milnes, Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-, Marquess of Crewe (1858–1945)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Milnes became Lord Houghton in 1885 on the death of his father; he took on the title of Earl of Crewe in 1895 upon the death of his uncle, and then added Crewe to Milnes.

Lieutenant of Ireland, with the family moving from Cheshire, where a young Colville had lived with her somewhat eccentric 'Uncle Crewe'.<sup>16</sup> In 1899, Crewe-Milnes remarried, this time to 'Peggy' Primrose, the daughter of the recent Liberal Prime Minister, Earl of Rosebery. Crewe-Milnes remained a senior figure in British Liberal politics until shortly before his death in 1945, including serving as the Lord-Lieutenant of London.<sup>17</sup> His role as Lord-Lieutenant of London was significant, not least because this meant that he was the leader of the local magistracy, amongst other duties.<sup>18</sup> Colville married George 'Geordie' Colville in 1908, and had three sons, David, born in 1909, Phillip in 1910, and John (or 'Jock') in 1915.<sup>19</sup>

Colville's family were imbued with the idea of public service and reform, and particularly of public service as part of their duty as members of the upper classes. It was not imbued with any reflection on the inequalities that had led to them being in this position, or how these inequalities might impact on the problems they were supposedly tackling. The significance of Crewe-Milne's political career for Colville was largely in terms of inheriting a sense of pride around a Whig family political tradition, coupled with a further sense of her father being an outspoken Home Ruler for Ireland, which was seen as 'unusual and faintly heroic'.<sup>20</sup> From an early age, therefore, Colville had a sense of the Liberal strand of social reform as being something natural and right, as something to uphold for future generations. Also instilled in Colville at an early age was an enthusiasm for Christianity, with an emphasis on public service and patronage. After the death of her mother in 1887, Colville and her siblings lived with her father's uncle, known as Uncle Crewe. Uncle Crewe was eccentric in many ways, but he was passionate about the spiritual health of those who lived on or near his property. His

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<sup>16</sup> Lady Cynthia Colville, *Crowded Life*, (London: Evans, 1963), pp. 10-34.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, 'Milnes, Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe'.

<sup>18</sup> The role of Lord-Lieutenant was created in 1889, following the establishment of the County of London through the Local Government Act 1888. The Lord-Lieutenant is the representative of the Monarch in the County of London, and undertakes a ceremonial role as well as supporting the local military services and acting as a link between local government, charities and community groups. See Greater London Lieutenancy, <http://www.greaterlondonlieutenancy.com/about-greater-london-lieutenancy/>, correct at 27 January 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Reynolds, 'Colville, Lady Cynthia'; Philip Ziegler, 'Colville, Sir John Rupert (1915–1987)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Colville, *Crowded Life*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>20</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, pp. 32, 34.

paternalism manifested itself in ensuring there were sufficient churches and church schools.<sup>21</sup> Colville's father and her stepmother were also involved in the legal system and its reform. Lord Crewe (as he was then known) was Lord-Lieutenant of the County of London between 1912 and 1944, whilst Peggy Primrose was one of the first women magistrates to be appointed in London in 1919.<sup>22</sup> It would, however, be Colville's friend, the social worker Gertrude Tuckwell, another member of that first cohort, who encouraged her to become a magistrate herself in 1929.<sup>23</sup> Finally, George Colville's family was equally as high-powered and well-connected, if there was not such a strong tradition of political involvement. He was also a devoted volunteer, working for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Professional Classes Aid Council and the King's College Hospital in South London, and also served as a visitor at Parkhurst Prison.<sup>24</sup>

There are several different ways in which Colville can be approached in historiographical terms. First, Colville was very much a part of the nineteenth-century phenomenon of women's philanthropic work. As the work of Davidoff and Hall, and Summers has shown, women's engagement in this type of work was a result of shifting social structures following industrialisation and urbanisation. The middle and upper classes increasingly lived in different parts of the town or city to the poor, moving away from the site of production or trade to larger homes in the greener and cleaner suburbs. Attending to the needs of the urban poor was one of the ways in which the middle classes on the one hand claimed a sphere of influence from the rural upper classes, for whom this had long been one of their paternalistic roles. Home visiting was a popular form of philanthropic work, which brought the middle classes to the homes of the poor, along with Bibles, advice and alms.<sup>25</sup> As Summers in particular notes,

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Reynolds, 'Colville, Lady Cynthia'; Anne Logan, 'Making Women Magistrates: Feminism, Citizenship and Justice in England and Wales, 1918-1950', (Unpublished University of Greenwich PhD thesis, 2002), p. 286.

<sup>23</sup> Logan, 'Making Women Magistrates', pp. 35, 285-6; Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1987, 2002); Anne Summers, 'A Home from Home: Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 33-63.

home visiting was a gendered as well as a classed pursuit, and it became more important as the nineteenth century progressed. It had two functions: first, to try and elevate the morals of the poor through personal contact with women from the middle and upper classes; and second, as a way for the women of the middle and upper classes to seek emancipation, if this was at the expense of working class liberties and privacy.<sup>26</sup> It was socially acceptable for privileged women to concern themselves with the supposed needs of working-class women and children, as this was deemed to be fit work for them in moral terms. It was a further manifestation of the notion that the British white upper and (increasingly) middle classes were responsible for 'looking after' the colonial subjects and workers who they exploited.<sup>27</sup> Middle and upper class women did not just concern themselves with working with working class women – huge efforts went into fundraising for these concerns. Fundraising was literally about raising funds, as well as about building a shared community and embedding social capital between members.<sup>28</sup> Some of it centred upon subscriptions and collections, but the use of events such as bazaars became increasingly important as part of publicising the cause, raising money and building links between the members. As Prochaska has shown, gaining the patronage of these events by elite women was crucial.<sup>29</sup> Colville engaged in home visiting in the earlier stages of her social work career, but was also of sufficient status to be one of the elite women it was so important to attract – especially when she became Lady-in-Waiting. Colville's entrée into philanthropic endeavours owed much to these traditions, if also to long-standing traditions of land-owning paternalism, including attending to the welfare of tenants and serving as a magistrate or justice of the peace.<sup>30</sup> Shoreditch may not have been Colville's ancestral manor, but the importance of both geographical and social place in defining her activities, particularly at the beginning of her philanthropic career, need to be considered.

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<sup>26</sup> Summers, 'A Home from Home', pp. 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> See especially Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, pp.205-9

<sup>28</sup> See R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *Historical Journal*, 26, 1 (1983), pp. 95-118.

<sup>29</sup> F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 65.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Peter Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834', *International Review of Social History*, 24, 3 (1979) pp.371-397.



Colville also cuts a rather transitional figure in terms of coming from these longer traditions at the same time that she was part of the development of 'maternalist politics'. Koven and Michel argue that the period from approximately the 1870s onwards marked a phase in which women from more privileged backgrounds not only volunteered their labour, but used socially acceptable work with poorer women and children to carve out professional and political identities.<sup>31</sup> One major area in which privileged and elite women were able to make headway both in Britain and elsewhere in the global north was in terms of the health and welfare of the child. This followed the eighteenth and nineteenth century cleavage of the 'separate spheres' into a world for men of business and politics and a world of the home for women, and, as Hall explores, the problematic and contested relationship between the two.<sup>32</sup> As mentioned earlier, the idea that 'delinquent' children needed to be treated differently from offending adults began to emerge from the 1840s.<sup>33</sup> The definition of a delinquent child was one which came from the middle- or upper-class observing eye, a child who ostensibly appeared to have little in the way of family resources or 'suitable parenting'. Their crimes were mostly those of poverty or mischief, often undertaken away from adult supervision. Working-class children were highly visible 'urchins' on the streets of towns and cities, a nuisance in the present day if begging, stealing or getting in the way of adults, with the threat of them growing up into criminal adults in the future.<sup>34</sup> The line between the deprived and the depraved child was a fine one, and it increasingly needed the attention of supposedly benevolent adults from the middle and upper classes.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States 1870 - 1920', *American Historical Review*, 95 (1990) pp.1076-1108; Seth Koven, 'Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action, and Child Welfare in Britain, 1840-1914', in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 94-135; Koven and Michel. But for a different interpretation, see Jane Lewis, 'Gender, the Family and Women's Agency in the Building of States: The British Case', *Social History*, 19, 1 (1994), pp.37-55.

<sup>32</sup> Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 10, 25-28.

<sup>34</sup> Heather Shore, 'Home, Play and Street Life: Causes of and Explanations for Juvenile Crime in the Early Nineteenth Century', in *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State*, ed. by Anthony Fletcher and Stephen Hussey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 96-114; Heather Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth Century London*, (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 8-9.

The notion of 'child saving' emerged in the 1880s and 1890s in the United States, and was imported as a concept to Britain through the networks around the National Society for the Prevention of Children to Children (NSPCC) and the Howard Association, both of whom were interested in promoting reform in welfare and penal matters.<sup>36</sup> The first juvenile court in the world was set up under the auspices of the Hull-House Settlement and the Chicago Women's Club, and combined detailed studies of children's backgrounds with a rehabilitative framework for dealing with them. Ben Lindsay, a judge who worked in Denver, Colorado, was another prominent figure in the field.<sup>37</sup> These practices spread through reformist networks that spanned the Atlantic as well as Europe and the British Empire, such as the feminist-criminal-justice reform network, which Anne Logan has studied. This informal yet powerful network was anti-corporal punishment and pro-probation, and drew in expertise from the Howard Association, the settlement movement and feminist organisations, amongst others.<sup>38</sup> The maternalist child-savers saw deprivation and delinquency as existing on a continuum, and as Logan has also shown, the juvenile courts in England and Wales would provide an arena for women magistrates to stake a claim.<sup>39</sup> Through looking more closely at Colville's life and career, something of how these processes and networks operated can be seen.

### **Colville's entrée into social work**

When Colville was a debutante at the turn of the twentieth century, concerted efforts were still being made to encourage young women of the elite to consider undertaking work on behalf of the poor and needy. This was work that would be a morally appropriate use of their time; little

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<sup>36</sup> Behlmer, *Friends of the Family*, pp. 232-5.

<sup>37</sup> Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Gwen Hoerr McNamee, *A Noble Social Experiment? The First 100 Years of the Cook County Juvenile Court 1899 -1999*, (Chicago: Chicago Bar Association, 1999); Behlmer, *Friends of the Family*.

<sup>38</sup> Anne Logan, *Feminism and Criminal Justice: A Historical Perspective*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> Anne Logan, 'A Suitable Person for Suitable Cases': The Gendering of Juvenile Courts in England, c.1910-39', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16, 2 (2005), pp.129-145; Logan, *Feminism and Criminal Justice*.

to no thought was given about how these women's families had acquired their wealth or how their domestic and imperial business activities sustained social inequalities. In addition to the array of voluntary opportunities that could be obtained through more established networks like the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and religious groups, the Personal Service Association had been founded in 1908 and tried to attract women such as Colville in order to engage and educate them about the problems of the working classes.<sup>40</sup> As an aristocratic young woman on the cusp of marriage, decorum dictated that Colville was effectively limited to fundraising activities rather than more hands-on work as chaperonage was required. She was deeply frustrated by these limitations. She wrote:

My hope had always been to engage in some less amateurish, more effective kind of social service which, on however small a scale, would attempt to grapple with the social day-to-day needs caused by deprivation and enforced idleness.<sup>41</sup>

Colville's understanding of the amateur and the professional in this context reveals a number of trends in her thinking, admittedly from the retrospective point of writing her autobiography, *Crowded Life*, in 1963. Her understanding of 'amateurish' appears to be framed in the way in which the COS defined it, which was in terms of looking 'scientifically' at the situation in hand, before adopting a detailed, involved 'case work' approach to tackling the problems. The alternative, as the COS had defined it at their foundation in 1869, was indiscriminate voluntary activity, with its objects chosen effectively at random, and with little thought given to its purposes or the consequences of giving, for example, money rather than food to families in need.<sup>42</sup> Case work was highly individualised, built on the deep personal investigation of a family or individual's circumstances. Yet it was supposedly understood through the paradigms of the new social sciences. Colville's desire to be effective also chimed with the increasing interest amongst members and supporters of the Liberal Party to use these new social

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<sup>40</sup> Georgina Brewis, 'From Working Parties to Social Work: Middle-Class Girls' Education and Social Service, 1890-1914', *History of Education*, 38, 6 (2009), pp. 761-777; Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, 95

<sup>42</sup> See Jane Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain: The Charity Organisation Society/Family Welfare Association since 1869*, (London: Edward Elgar, 1995).

scientific techniques on a national scale.<sup>43</sup> The consequence of the Liberal landslide of 1906 was to introduce a considerable amount of legislation that sought to address these structural issues: the Children Act 1908, which introduced the juvenile courts and brought together youth and child welfare and justice, was but one example.<sup>44</sup> The legislation tried to tackle these structural issues through increasing state involvement and regulation; there was no serious attempt to disrupt the class or economic systems.

There were, however, other drivers behind Colville's voluntary work. Colville's volunteering was, from the outset, constructed in gendered and classed ways. Her voluntary activity increased once she had married, in part because of the change in her status and the subsequent expectations around respectability and access to different types of spaces. Yet it was also shaped by her conception of London, and specifically the 'East End' of the city, which was a space a woman from her background would not normally have cause to enter. Colville, like many others, was seduced by the idea of the East End.<sup>45</sup> The East End, the Rookeries, the Jago and many other deprived parts of London had provided writers such as Charles Dickens, Henry Mayhew, W.T. Stead and Jack London, amongst others, with a rich landscape to explore. Readers were treated to pen-portraits and cartoons of life on the streets and inside the slums of the city. Proponents of hands-on work in the slums, such as the Reverend Samuel Barnett and his wife Henrietta, the founders of the first university settlement, Toynbee Hall, were regularly featured in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and many other Liberal-leaning publications. Reflections on settlement life and publications based on their research were also published from the 1880s.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform*.

<sup>44</sup> See Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 121-6; Kate Bradley, Anne Logan, and Simon Shaw, 'Editorial: Youth and Crime: Centennial Reflections on the Children Act 1908', *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, 3, 2 (2009), pp.1-17

<sup>45</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, pp. 96-7.

<sup>46</sup> For example, see 'Picture Exhibition in the Pampered East', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 January 1889, p.7. Research conducted under the auspices of the settlement included: Charles Russell and Harry S. Lewis, *The Jew in London: A Study of Racial Character and Present-Day Conditions, Being Two Essays Prepared for the Toynbee Trustees*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901); E. J. Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities*, (London: Dent, 1904); H. R. P. Gamon, *The London Police Court to-Day and to-Morrow*, (London: J.M. Dent, 1907). Memoirs based on settlement life published before 1918

Beyond the frisson of the 'East End' as a place of deprivation and depravity, Colville's choice of Shoreditch was also driven by her emotional life. Colville wrote of how she and her husband 'studied carefully the map of London', and focussed on Shoreditch, as:

it appeared to be rather like Chelsea, a well-knit, not too big district, easily accessible, geographically simple, and conveniently near my husband's office, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Moorgate Place.<sup>47</sup>

Colville was properly referring to the Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch, created in 1899, which encompassed Shoreditch, Hoxton and Haggerston. The borough was bounded to north and the west by the Regent's Canal, to the south and south west by the City of London. The Kingsland Road running north-south through the borough separated Hoxton and Haggerston to the west and east. Colville typically referred to Shoreditch, meaning the borough but, more often than not, conflated Hoxton and Shoreditch. The boundaries afforded a sense of close community and territoriality, the sense of a 'manor'. Places in working-class London were sometimes described as 'manors', in most cases drawing on the boundaries of the original medieval manors. Attachment to a manor such as Bermondsey or Whitechapel could be powerful.<sup>48</sup> As a woman who had grown up with Uncle Crewe and his devotion to the people who lived on his estate, there was considerable resonance in choosing a specific geographical area in which to undertake work. Colville chose her 'manor' in more sense than one. And, last but not least, it was a 'manor' that was in harmony with her personal life, affording her the opportunity to commute to work with Geordie.

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include A. L. Hodson, *Letters from a Settlement*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1909); Alexander Paterson, *Across the Bridges: Or Life by the South London Riverside*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1911); Henrietta Barnett, *Canon Barnett: His Life, Work and Friends*, (London: John Murray, 1918).

<sup>47</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 96

<sup>48</sup> See Gillian Evans, *Educational Failure and Working Class White Children in Britain*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Colville used the networks of philanthropic women to find a way in. Her first step was to contact the area head of the Personal Service Association, who then directed her to contact the local COS branch. By the first decade of the twentieth century, study circles and other methods of training young women below the age of 35 in social theory and social work had become commonplace, if the PSA and COS were not as strongly connected with this.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, Colville was given an introductory course of study before she could begin her programme of social work:

I soon found myself at 19 New North Road acquiring the elements of social theory, and becoming deeply interested in the practical side of its application. I had not enough experience to undertake intricate enquiries, but I was encouraged to pay friendly visits, and in this way got to know many charming families and to learn something of the problems of poverty, unemployment and other forms of social hardship.<sup>50</sup>

Whilst the COS were at the vanguard of social work reform before the First World War, with their emphasis on detailed case work to try and understand the problems faced by a family or individual before recommending a solution, Colville's visiting activities spoke to the earlier traditions of friendly visiting, as Summers and others have discussed.<sup>51</sup> It also had something of the settlement house philosophy of learning from the poor by immersing oneself in their environment, and of improving social conditions through individual contact, effectively a form of mentoring.<sup>52</sup> As a woman from an extremely privileged background, it was surely right that Colville should be exposed to the realities of a world that was very different from hers.

### **Infant and maternal welfare**

Once suitably prepared, Colville was brought into the Shoreditch COS's attempt to improve maternal and infant mortality rates in the borough. The state of the nation's health was of

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<sup>49</sup> Brewis, 'From Working Parties to Social Work'.

<sup>50</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 96.

<sup>51</sup> Summers, 'A Home from Home'.

<sup>52</sup> See Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform*.

major concern in the first years of the twentieth century, fuelled by the poor physical state of working-class conscripts to the South African wars, as well as fears of competition from other nations and the fall of the British Empire.<sup>53</sup> The working class family, and particularly the health of children, was a particular focus for activity. For school children, the introduction of school medical inspections and school meals was a significant area of public health activity, drawing upon the basis of compulsory elementary education as a means of engaging with families en masse. Mothers were also targeted, partly as a means of trying to improve maternal health as an end in itself, but also as a method for tackling the related problem of infant mortality. This was to be achieved through a programme of direct intervention and supervision in the form of health visitor visits and weigh-ins for babies and toddlers on the one hand and, on the other, through the education of mothers in hygiene, nutrition and child development. As Summers notes, such activity was directed at shaping the working class home firstly through the mother, who would then gradually work on the working class father as a result.<sup>54</sup>

The Borough of Shoreditch had two health visitors, one of whom covered the Hoxton area to the west and the other Haggerston to the east. With a densely-packed, deprived population including many small children, this was deemed unacceptable by the Medical Officer of Health.<sup>55</sup> One of the solutions was to set up a School for Mothers, which would provide education in matters of 'mothercraft', hygiene and feeding. The situation in Shoreditch attracted national attention. Norah March, a prominent Eugenicist, used infant mortality rates to make a case for the education of mothers through such initiatives, drawing on the case of the Shoreditch School for Mothers. She argued that, for the 164 in 1000 children born between 1911 and 1914 who died before reaching the age of 5, a significant proportion could have been prevented through thorough antenatal care of the mother or through better hygiene and

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<sup>53</sup> Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop Journal*, 5 (1978), pp.9-65.

<sup>54</sup> Summers, 'A Home frm Home'.

<sup>55</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 97.

habits of reproductive labour in the home.<sup>56</sup> March pointed out that the death rate per 1,000 births in the first year of life in Shoreditch was 148, whereas in the more affluent London suburb of Hampstead, the rate was 74. Initiatives such as National Baby Week was a means by which various agencies could come together to share resources and promote 'healthy' practices to mothers, whilst the School for Mothers provided a year-round source of information and training for parents.<sup>57</sup>

This was the context in which Colville was invited to serve as the Secretary of this School for Mothers, a role she undertook for twenty years.<sup>58</sup> The Shoreditch Infant Welfare Centre opened in 1913, with permanent premises later being built at 210 Kingsland Road in 1922-3.<sup>59</sup> As Secretary, Colville was charged with visiting those mothers who did not bring their babies to the clinics and weigh-ins as often as they should be, and through this, got to know many of the families and their circumstances.<sup>60</sup> Other than her preparatory reading as mentioned in her autobiography, there is no evidence to suggest that Colville had had any more sustained formal training in social work, but used her experience in visiting families in a 'friendly' capacity. Whilst Colville was also a mother, her experience of parenting in the privileged environs of Chelsea was considerably different to that of the women she visited. Colville served as governess to her three boys, but had the help of one Nanny Sharp and a French teacher, before all three boys were sent away to Harrow.<sup>61</sup> Although Colville was conscious of the privilege she enjoyed as an upper-class mother, she did not reflect on the potential shortcomings of boarding school education or other aspects of well-to-do parenting. Colville's account implies a personal, friendly visiting of these mothers, but there is a suggestion that Colville was herself trying to 'teach' or reform the women's ways. For example, Colville's role

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<sup>56</sup> Norah March, 'The Eugenic Aspects of National Baby Week', *Eugenics Review*, 9 (1917), pp. 95-6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 97.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*; Wellcome Library, London's Pulse: Medical Officer of Health reports, 1848-1972, Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Shoreditch, 1922, p.26-7, available at <http://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/report/b19822182/28#?asi=0&ai=29&z=-1.3983%2C0%2C3.7965%2C1.5161>, correct at 4 February 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 102.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 75-7.



did not, apparently, just extend to the smallest members of the family, but could involve advising parents on the prospects of their oldest children and work, not always successfully or with the greatest sympathy.<sup>62</sup> With little detail on the extent to which she was allowed or denied entry to homes, it is impossible to compare Colville's welcome in the homes of Shoreditch with, for example, the extent to which other home visitors or indeed other members of professions such as police officers or ministers were allowed into these spaces. It does, however, pose questions about the degree to which obligations to one's supposed 'betters' allowed her access to these homes, in comparison to visitors without the benefit of her social standing.

In the course of the 1920s and 1930s, Colville increasingly became a spokesperson for the cause of maternal and child welfare. This aspect of her volunteering took off after her appointment as a Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Mary in 1923, which raised her profile further still. Colville was confident and outspoken, unafraid to put forward politicised ideas. For example, in July 1917, Colville responded to a provocation by a 'woman correspondent' of the Manchester Guardian that 'baby-rearing factories' were the solution to the problem of infant health. Colville's riposte was that, whilst the time was not right for the equal distribution of wealth across all levels of society:

the present is certainly the right time for a more equal distribution of that portion of wealth that babies demand if they are to live and thrive.

Very shortly before this episode, the Liberal Lord Rhondda had attempted to create a Ministry of Health to try and provide some overarching structure and co-ordination to healthcare, but had been defeated. Colville was scathing about the consequences of this, which she felt left infants at the mercy of 'scattered and competitive departments'.<sup>63</sup> The implication of this exchange, hidden away in an article on page six of the newspaper about Baby Weeks, was

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid. pp. 102-3.

<sup>63</sup> 'Baby-rearing factories', Manchester Guardian, 4 July 1917, p.6 See also <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/poor-law-ministry-of-health.htm>, correct at 9 July 2015

that Westminster and Whitehall were simply not doing enough to change the situation. Colville was interested in the redistribution of wealth, but not in any way that challenged the very privileged position that she and others of her class enjoyed or where their wealth had come from. Whilst Colville had strong associations with the reformist elements of the Liberal Party and their sympathisers, she eschewed a career as a Member of Parliament in favour in order to take up the role of Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Mary. In 1919, with a Labour-led council returned in Shoreditch, Colville was co-opted onto its Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, whose role was to co-ordinate and promote this area of health and welfare following the Maternity and Child Welfare Act 1918.<sup>64</sup> This role would, on the one hand, bring Colville into the political world of Shoreditch, but also launch her into her career in the Royal Household. At a time when the franchise had been extended to all men and some women, Colville was drawn not to the possibilities of democratic structures, but to a role that was essentially feudal in its origins.

### **Lady-in-Waiting**

The School for Mothers had a number of well-connected women who were associated with it. In 1917, Lady Grimston, Lady Newnes, and Lady Wyndham organised a *matinée* performance at the New Theatre in London in aid of the School's crèche, which was attended by the King George V and Queen Mary. Colville had also attended it.<sup>65</sup> This event would foreshadow an episode around five years later, when the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee asked Colville to invite the Queen to open a new nurses' home. In *Crowded Life*, Colville stated that she felt somewhat ill-equipped to do this, as 'Her Majesty would have the haziest awareness of my existence'. This was modest or possibly disingenuous, given her family connections, which indeed she called upon. She some help from her father, who

composed a beautifully expressed and persuasive letter to the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Harry Verney, emphasising the enormous pleasure that would be

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<sup>64</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, p. 103.

<sup>65</sup> 'Court and Society', *Observer*, 18 November 1917, p.3

caused to Shoreditch if Her Majesty would be so kind and gracious as to accede to the Borough Council's request.

The Queen agreed, and the event in question took place on 18 March 1922.<sup>66</sup> Unlike any of the members of the borough council, Colville had the social and cultural capital that would enable her to get her father to write a letter to the Queen. The event was a huge one in terms of the way in which the community came out to meet the Queen, but also in exposing her to a part of London that she was not familiar with.<sup>67</sup> It also further exposed Colville to the Queen.

With the 1923 general election on the horizon, Colville was invited to become the Liberal candidate for Shoreditch, on the same day that an invitation to serve as a 'Woman of the Bedchamber' on a part-time basis also arrived in the post. Colville was thrilled by the possibility of standing for Parliament, but declined, ostensibly on the grounds of needing to pay for three sets of school and university fees for their sons, as well as to avoid upsetting her husband's Conservative sensibilities. Another incentive was that her husband 'knew King George V, with whom his brother had served in the Navy'.<sup>68</sup> This account of her joining the Royal Household was written in the early 1960s, some forty years after the event, and we may well question the extent to which this had been rehearsed in that time. What we cannot know is how far George Colville preferred this role for his wife, or whether Colville felt that she would be better suited to it. However, in many respects, the Lady-in-Waiting role was a certainty, whereas the role of MP required being returned by the electorate. Shoreditch returned a Labour MP, Ernest Thurtle, in 1923. As the son-in-law of George Lansbury, Thurtle was well-established in East London politics, and this may well have been a factor in Colville's decision.<sup>69</sup> The role of Lady-in-Waiting was sufficiently flexible to allow Colville to spend time with her sons, but also to pursue other voluntary interests. Rightly or wrongly, it also granted her access to a platform that she might not otherwise have had in the Commons. Regardless,

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<sup>66</sup> Colville, *Crowded Life*, pp. 103-5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 104-5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107.

<sup>69</sup> Stephen Brooke, 'Thurtle, Dorothy (1890–1973)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

the Queen hand-picked Colville for this role, which entailed managing the Queen's personal and public correspondence, travelling with the Queen and many other personal matters.

Colville continued her work on behalf of women and the smallest children throughout her career. As the 1920s and 1930s progressed, she became a spokesperson for the Maternal Mortality Committee, and a founding supporter of the National Birthday Trust Fund, which promoted the use of and undertook research into analgesia in childbirth.<sup>70</sup> As nutrition became a hot topic in the later 1930s, Colville made comments about how to feed teenagers; she also led appeals in 1940 for evacuees to be provided with warm clothes for the winter, as many had taken their inadequate clothes with them.<sup>71</sup> Later, she would be involved with the work of the British Epilepsy Foundation, the Townswomen's Guilds, and many others.<sup>72</sup> For the purposes of this article, however, the significant factor in the development of her work was her appointment, in 1929, to the magistracy in London.<sup>73</sup>

### **The juvenile courts**

By taking up this role, Colville was following in the footsteps of her stepmother, Lady Crewe, who had become a magistrate in 1919. Colville's good friend, Gertrude Tuckwell, had also joined the magistracy in that first year that women were able to do this.<sup>74</sup> Colville's father, Lord Crewe, was also by this point the Lord-Lieutenant of London, and had supported the Juvenile Courts (Metropolis) Act 1920, which expanded the role of women on juvenile court panels.<sup>75</sup> Lady Crewe was also the Chairman of the Lord Chancellor's Women's Advisory

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<sup>70</sup> 'Death of mothers in childbirth: Mr Greenwood's hopes', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 October 1929, p.15; A. Susan Williams, *Women and Childbirth in the Twentieth Century: A History of the National Birthday Trust Fund 1928-93*, (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> 'Eating to live', *The Times*, 15 November 1935, p. 17; 'Winter clothing for evacuees', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 January 1940, p.10

<sup>72</sup> 'The cruel burden of epilepsy', *The Times*, 6 September 1950, p.8; 'Townswomen's Guilds', *Sunday Times*, 23 March 1930, p.19

<sup>73</sup> Logan, 'Making Women Magistrates', p. 288.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* p. 286.

<sup>75</sup> See Logan, 'A Suitable Person'

Committee, which appointed women to the magistracy.<sup>76</sup> Colville was exceptionally well connected within the ranks of the reformist magistracy, with their Liberal and left-wing tendencies.<sup>77</sup> These connections, as well as the reputation she garnered through her work at the Inner London Juvenile Court, led to her being of the two female magistrates appointed to the Home Office committee which was tasked with drawing up the rules under which the juvenile courts would work as a result of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.<sup>78</sup>

Colville therefore came into the magistracy with a history of working with families through the case work paradigm. Although she was not a social work practitioner in any professional sense, and therefore her engagement with such matters was at a slight remove, Colville was a passionate champion of innovative techniques in social work. She stepped down from her School for Mothers work around the same time that she became a JP, and when the London County Council took over the voluntary infant welfare work that had been done in the Borough.<sup>79</sup> Colville was appointed to the Inner London Juvenile Court, which was chaired by Sir William Clarke Hall and which sat at Old Street Magistrates court and then at Shoreditch Town Hall before moving to Toynbee Hall, a university settlement on Commercial Street.<sup>80</sup> The Inner London Juvenile Court was a suitable place for Colville to move to, not least because she knew the terrain from her infant welfare work – and the pressures on the families in the local area. It was also an interesting court from the point of view of its commitment to innovation. The presiding magistrate on Colville's appointment was Sir William Clarke Hall. Clarke Hall had begun his career in youth justice and welfare when he had become involved with the NSPCC; he became a juvenile court magistrate in 1910, when the first courts opened as a result of the Children Act 1908.<sup>81</sup> Clarke Hall also came from a tradition of case work and investigation, but introduced a paternal element to this. He kept in touch with many of the

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<sup>76</sup> Logan, 'Making Women Magistrates', pp. 20, 148-58.

<sup>77</sup> Logan, *Feminism and Criminal Justice*, p. 61.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65.

<sup>79</sup> 'Lady Cynthia Colville, infant welfare pioneer', *The Times*, 17 June 1968

<sup>80</sup> Basil L. Q. Henriques, *The Indiscretions of a Magistrate: Thoughts on the Work of the Juvenile Court*, (London: Non-Fiction Book Club, 1950), p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> NSPCC Archives, London, 209/8 'Sir William Clarke Hall' *The Child's Guardian*, February 1932, p.10; 'Sir William Clarke Hall', *The Child's Guardian*, November 1932, p.79

children who had come through his court, and made many personal visits to them. He reportedly refused to send a child to an institution that he had not visited.<sup>82</sup> Although he did sentence boys to the birch in the first year or two that the court operated, he was a fervent supporter of non-corporal methods of punishment – specifically probation. Like many of the women Logan has noted, Clarke Hall was keen to use probation as a means of providing the wayward young with a suitable role model and close attention.

Only the court registers of the Inner London Juvenile Court survive, so understanding of the detailed work undertaken must come from other sources. Rather than going to families' homes to meet with the parents, Colville and colleagues had children and their families summonsed to them. In many ways, the juvenile court was family case work par excellence, as detailed investigations of children were frequently presented to the court. For the more troubled children and young people, such investigations also sought to explore their inner lives and emotions. With Clarke Hall's strong encouragement, the magistrates at this court also embraced the new practice of child guidance and psychology. They made use of the London County Council's child psychologists and those at the pioneering Tavistock Clinic, and also worked closely with the Bell Lane Child Guidance Clinic, which was located a few streets away from the court.<sup>83</sup>

Colville and her colleagues at the Inner London Juvenile Court, Basil Henriques and J.J. Mallon, were outspoken on matters concerning juvenile justice, particularly where they felt there was a universality to the cases in question. There were indeed serious questions to be asked about the shape of juvenile justice and the role it had to play in society. In 1935, Colville addressed a conference on implementing the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 at the Mansion House in York, and J.R. Macdonald, a Hull stipendiary magistrate, jokingly asked if

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<sup>82</sup> 'Sir William Clarke Hall', *The Child's Guardian*, November 1932, p.79

<sup>83</sup> William Clarke Hall, *Children's Courts*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926), pp. 97-9; George Renton, 'The East London Child Guidance Clinic', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 19 (1978), 309-312.

there were any magistrates in the room under 50.<sup>84</sup> Despite the levity, Macdonald raised a vital question, and one which had consequences for the innovative work Colville and others were trying to do. During the Second World War, the call-up of the (relatively) young magistrates meant that many retirees came back into service to keep the juvenile courts running. There was a subsequent rise in the number of birchings.<sup>85</sup> Colville and Henriques were not just concerned with young people once they had been dealt with, but were active champions of after-care and support, especially for those who had been sent to an institution. In 1936, they wrote an impassioned letter to *The Times* calling for better support for 2,000 or so children and young people in this situation each year, drawing on their work in the juvenile courts but also as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Young Persons' Discharged Prisoners Aid Society of Wormwood Scrubs. They argued that prisons and prison-like environments often encouraged young people to become entrenched in breaking the law, rather than reforming them, as probation might.<sup>86</sup> For magistrates with such a concern in trying to prevent juvenile and adult delinquency through rehabilitation, such outcomes were frustrating.

Colville remained on the juvenile court bench until 1952, when she became a Lay Justice for the Bow Street magistrates' court.<sup>87</sup> Her concern for the young people of Shoreditch and Hoxton, however, continued into the 1960s. By 1955 she had become the chairman of the Shoreditch Project experiment, which offered an inter-agency 'intensive casework service' for those families at risk of breakdown.<sup>88</sup> The project was funded by a five year grant from the Nuffield Foundation and the William Johnston Yapp Trust, and sought to demonstrate the possibilities for undertaking in-depth casework with multiple members of a family over an extended period of time.<sup>89</sup> Colville was also a patron, along with Basil Henriques and other figures, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Harold Scott, the Commissioner of the

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<sup>84</sup> 'Young magistrates for the juvenile courts', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 March 1935, p.18

<sup>85</sup> *Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945*, Cmd. 7227, London: HMSO, 1947 p.10

<sup>86</sup> 'Manufacturing criminals', *The Times*, 29 September 1936, p.10

<sup>87</sup> 'Lady Cynthia Colville, infant welfare pioneer', *The Times*, 17 June 1968

<sup>88</sup> 'Family Welfare', *The Times*, 23 March 1955, p.9

<sup>89</sup> Michael Power, 'Casework in the Shoreditch Project', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 5 (1959), 10.

Metropolitan Police, of the Barge Boys' Club. The Barge had grown out of conversations that had been held at the Oxford House settlement around the subject of innovative 'detached' youth work with 'unclubbable' youth. The Barge sought to engage young men who would not otherwise go to or be accepted into traditional boys' clubs by providing them with a Thames barge to renovate and crew.<sup>90</sup> Colville was likely to be the lady-in-waiting who brokered an offer by Queen Mary to buy the club a barge.<sup>91</sup> The Barge Club came to an end, and moved on to land, eventually transforming into the Redvers Club and then the Hoxton Café project, which aimed to provide a space for the 'unclubbables' run by approachable, non-judgemental staff and volunteers.<sup>92</sup> Colville continued her support for this innovative work as a patron until shortly before her death.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

Lady Cynthia Colville was active in voluntary social work from 1908 until the mid-1960s. Her entrée into this world was informed by the expectations of women of her class to be active volunteers, partly as a means of executing their religious duties and also for upholding the status quo. Indeed, she chose Shoreditch because of its reputation and because it was convenient for her to travel with her husband. Her infant welfare work was shaped also by the acceptable areas that female philanthropists could be involved in, and Colville was also a beneficiary of maternalist politics and the inequalities which allowed her to benefit from them, like many of her class. Where Colville stands out in the historical record is in the way in which she used first her family connections and then her own within the Royal Household to promote the interests of Shoreditch. Colville was at once very traditional in her approach to working on behalf of the child at risk – becoming a lady-in-waiting was an historic role in the Royal

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<sup>90</sup> M. Lloyd Turner, *Ship without Sails: An Account of the Barge Boys' Club*, (London: University of London Press, 1953); Peter Kuenstler, *Learning About Community: Oxford House in Bethnal Green, 1940-48*, (London: Oxford House and the Settlements and Social Action Research Group, 2004).

<sup>91</sup> Kuenstler, *Learning About Community*, p. 40.

<sup>92</sup> H. M. Holden, *The Hoxton Cafe Project: Report on Seven Years Work*, (Leicester: Youth Service Information Centre, 1972); Barrie M. Biven and Hyla M. Holden, 'Hoxton: Informal Youth Work in a Cafe Setting', in *True Pretences. Psychodynamic Work with the Lost, the Angry and the Depressed*, ed. by Barrie M. Biven (Leicester: Matador, 2005), pp. 246-59.

<sup>93</sup> Hackney Archives, *The Hoxton Café Project, 1966. Report No.3*, p.2



Household – but also ground-breaking, joining the magistracy in the first decade that it was open to women. Her connections were also extremely useful in this career in the magistracy, in aligning her with a suitable court in the first place, and later enabling her to be involved in the reform of court practice. For all her status within the British establishment, Colville was a champion of innovation. Colville was sympathetic to the Shoreditch child and his or her family, but more as a subject to be helped and treated. Before the First World War, she championed educating mothers about their parenting skills; after the Second World War, she was keen to find ways in which the wayward youth of East London could be engaged. These were not necessarily the most popular causes, or one around which there was an empathetic consensus: in the 1950s, the rise of the Teddy Boys was met with calls for the return of the birch as a means of dealing with young offenders. Colville could add her weight to these causes. Through Colville, we can also see some of the continuities of thought around the ways in which the child at risk should be dealt with. For all the innovations of the Shoreditch Project in applying new techniques in groupwork and casework to needy families in the area, it still had much in common with the invasive and detailed examinations favoured by the COS and then the Inner London Juvenile Court under William Clarke Hall. The link between all these activities was Lady Cynthia Colville.