



Women in Men's jobs?

The Growth of the Unions

Trade Union membership grew massively between 1888 when it was 750,000 to 6,500,000 by 1918. In 1914 90% of Trade Union members were men.

Female workers had been less unionised than men. They often worked part-time or for family run businesses where no union operated. Some Unions were hostile towards women workers. World War 1 forced the Unions to deal with the issue of women workers.

Women were usually paid less than men. Employers got round wartime equal pay regulations by employing several women to replace one man, splitting jobs into a number of components.

In 1914 there were 357,000 women in unions, mostly in the textile trade. By 1918 there were over 1,000,000 women in Trade Unions. This was an increase of over 160%.



Female ship worker operating a furnace



Woman working on a propeller.



Woman delivering a sack of coal.



Woman tarring the road.



Women cleaning a Locomotive



Women carriage cleaners.



Women haulage workers



Woman operating railway signals



Group of Female Railway Workers



Female Bricklayers



Women Civil Servants



Woman operating a filter press in a glucose factory.

By 1916 the munitions factories were finding it hard to hold onto workers. The work was physically exhausting and the poisonous fumes, noise and accidents were taking their toll.

With the introduction of conscription in 1916 many industries lost their workers. Women took over many of their jobs, though they were employed on 'wartime only' contracts and many of the jobs done by men had been split into two or three enabling employers to offer lower wages.

EMPLOYMENT IN DERBY 1911

Occupation	Number of men employed	Number of women employed
Railway workers	4,755	13
Coach and wagon making	2,141	7
Heavy industry	7,697	97
Electrical engineering	588	91
Textiles	1,472	3,481
Domestic service	33	2,641

Women learned to drive and took on jobs as haulage drivers and ambulance drivers. In the steelworks and coal mines they did the kind of manual work men would have considered impossible.

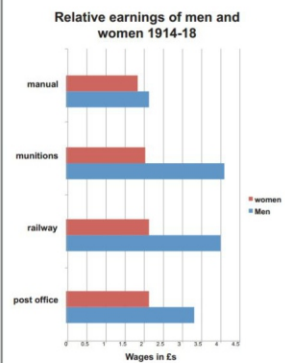
Women joined the Civil Service in large numbers as clerical workers – though these women were generally the better educated middle classes.

Locally the Midland Railway employed over 250 women in munitions and hundreds of others as carriage and locomotive cleaners, signal women and porters. Women found other roles in the railway industry eventually being employed as ticket collectors. By 1918 ¾ of ticket collectors were female. By 1918 over 100,000 women had been employed on temporary contracts by the railways. Most were dismissed at the end of the war.

Alice as Railway Worker

The Midland railway carriage works was easier for Alice to get to and in 1917 she was employed as a carriage washer cleaning the outside of the carriages. The work was dangerous. She worked in dimly lit yards with a lot of traffic and had to climb on the top of carriages to clean them. At least 2 women were killed in the Derby works, being caught between the buffers and the trains.

Alice earned around £2 a week and could get to work in an hour leaving more time for family and home life.



June 1917
Dear Charley
Thank you for your letter.
How sad that Major Winterbottom was killed. I know that you thought a lot of him and regarded him as a friend as well as a commanding officer. I'm glad that Fickle was 'smuggled' out though, at least he will survive the war.
So you are now looking after the officer's mess. Does that mean you are actually doing the cooking? It must be good to be deprived of guard duties even if you still have to go out on patrol – still, it means you get to ride Crippen again.

The tragic news from home is that 'Old Whiskers', the 8th Earl, died on 5th February. He had been working in the engineers workshop when he was badly burned. He died of blood poisoning. They say that his dying wish was that the hunt go out as he was being buried. As the hounds were released they chased the fox to the graveside and stood howling as his coffin was lowered. I did not witness this as I was working but Mother was there and said how frightening it was. Dudley, the Earl's younger brother has succeeded him as the 9th Earl.

I told you in my last letter that I was thinking of changing my job. Well, Charles Wincott and Sam Walker told me they were hiring at the Leco works so I applied and have been taken on as a carriage cleaner. It's a shorter journey and the 25 tram stops right outside the wagon works so I can do the whole trip in less than an hour. The wages are similar but the conditions of work are better. Not so noisy which gives us girls a chance to gossip! It can be quite hair raising at times, especially when I have to climb on top of the carriages with my brush and bucket to clean the roofs.

We have our own 'facilities' and they have even employed a welfare officer to help out with any problems. It's a good job with many more opportunities than at the Shell factory.
Take care, Charley.
Your friend
Alice



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