HOW DID THE POSITION OF WOMEN CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH HISTORY?

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlášení

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Abstract

I was concerned with the progress of the position of women in the British society throughout the selected periods which I considered important. I have found out that women were equal to men in the Celtic society. In times of feudalism and Christianity the position of women was worse, they did not get respect they deserved. The second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century meant a great improvement for women in many spheres. They had to fight for a long time and strongly for the changes but they succeeded in many issues.
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Introduction

My work concentrates on the changes of the position of women throughout selected periods. I concentrate on the Celtic society and my goal is to determine what the traditions were like, what they influenced in lives of women, what the social position of women in comparison to men was, how men perceived their beings, what duties women had, what rights they could use in living, what occupations and public functions they could hold, whether they had the access to education and how they looked.

My second interest are Tudors and Stuarts and life of prominent and ordinary women during their reign. I point out the possibilities which ordinary women had and I put it as a contrast to the opportunities prominent and rich women had, what problems women had, what their position in the social life was and how they were accepted and seen.

In the next chapters, I am dealing with 18th, 19th and 20th century and my main themes are also the opportunities of women, their rights for education, voting, respect and also how they fought for all that, how successful they were and what their demands were like.

I deal with significant movements such as feminism and organizations of suffragettes. My intend for this is to explore how many women took part in the organizations of suffragettes, how far they were willing to go to make society and especially men respect them, how successful they were, what actions were typical for them and most importantly what issues they tried to solve and what rights and opportunities they were fighting for. I decided to investigate also feminism as an ideology, to learn about its main features, to understand what issues it stood for, what types evolved of it, how long it was evolving and how it defined a woman as such.

I also write about the change of fashion in order to find out whether the changes of the women’s position had an impact on it, what the images and signs of a beautiful woman were because usually they tend to appear in fashion and to signify what kind of women was in a certain period celebrated. I also intend to research what was acceptable to wear and what it meant.
1 Important historic periods – an overview of the change of the position of women in British society

1.1 Earliest Times

1.1.2 The Celts

Celts arrived to the British Isles around 600 BC. Already a hundred years later their culture spread over the most of the area of the Isles.

“The Celts were a group of peoples loosely tied by similar language, religion, and cultural expression.”

It is an important fact to know that Celts were not just one firm nation but more tribes because they had no central government and the tribes were warriors above all. And it was also possible for women to fight. It was common that women had more independence than those living in medieval Christian societies. Equality between sexes was normal among the richer Celts. Women were even admired for their morality, modesty or looking after the home. Their rights were extended instead of the rest of the Europe. They were protected by the law for their whole life. In their childhood they were defended by their parents, later by the husband and then by the children. When there was an illegitimate child born or the parents of a married couple did not agree with the wedding then it was not always the woman’s duty to raise the child. Because when it was the disagreement of the woman’s father, the man was obligated to provide for the child. Women could also own property and give presents to anyone thanks to this fact. But when speaking about large and valuable items it was necessary to consult it with husbands. But when a woman inherited the father’s property because of him not having any sons, she could keep it even after marriage and took the responsibility for the husband. And another surprising fact is that such a husband or his sons would not even inherit the wife’s money because her family would. Women were also protected in the field of crimes. When there was a


crime committed against a woman, it was considered to be a crime against her guardian and the criminal had to pay a fine. There were also rules that defined a sexual rape and they gave women rights to gain a compensation for this kind of crime. But there were exceptions. When a woman went unguarded to potentially dangerous places such as establishments where men were drinking, she herself risked being raped and that is why she would not be offered any compensations by the law. But when a rape was classified as a forced rape, if the woman became pregnant, it would have been the duty of the criminal to raise the child. There was also the possibility to get paid even when the woman was only kissed against her will. In Ireland, Church did a lot to improve the life of women. But the biggest advantages were given to nuns who were taken seriously when giving evidence against a clergyman. Women were also not discriminated in the matter of education, they got the opportunity to study the same way as men. But they also had the same duties as men because the punishments for a murder were the same for both sexes. It was Christianity what brought the idea of the importance of women’s virginity when marrying. But they could participate in political issues. The Celtic women also had the chance to rule their tribes. One famous woman remains a proof of this. She was called Boudica and she is best known for her leading her tribe against Romans and also for the success in the battle when her army destroyed the Roman capital London. I must add that later the army was defeated. Although Romans brought many innovations to England and considered Celts underdeveloped, the Celtic women certainly had more rights than the Roman women. But to take the war in detail, it started in AD 60 when Romans attempted to occupy Boudica’s lands after her husband’s death. She protested, that is why the Roman soldiers violated her daughters and flagellated her. Such a kind of deeds brought consequences. Boudica called the allied tribes Iceni and Trinivantes and started the revolt against Romans. It was very strong and severe, the Celts


treated Romans cruelly. Britons came to the battles with great amounts of soldiers but they used no lines and formations as a troop. Their women were in wagons. Romans surprisingly did not hesitate to take a stand against them and of course it was the Romans who were defeated and many of them were killed. Later Boudica managed to destroy not just the Romans’ capital London but also the two other principal Roman towns in England. She was defeated in a final battle in AD 61 that took place somewhere in the Midlands. Rather than to be captured, Boudica poisoned herself. That was a very strong deed. It is possible to spell her name also Boudicca or Boadicea. The spelling Boudica is a translation from the Celtic word bouda which means victory. The existing spelling Boadicea is caused by a scribe’s error. Boudica was raised in Surrey and most probably she had red hair which is the most famous feature of her known appearance. It is not sure because there is only one insufficient source mentioning the red colour of her hair and this source was written a long time after she died. Her husband was the king of the Icenians which was a Celtic tribe. His name was Prasutagus. As it was possible in the Celtic society, Prasutagus let his two daughters inherit his property and money. In those times he was a very rich man.

At first Boudica was taken as a negative hero of the history by early British historians because they thought of the Roman culture and innovations as progressive. They saw her actions as an attempt to stop the development that Romans brought and they overlooked the fact of her fighting against their violent driving into her lands. By Romans, she was considered an unsuccessful warrior but by Celts she was considered a strong hero. Her reputation improved in the period of the reign of Elizabeth I when artists used her example as a strong and independent woman. She was also celebrated in times of Queen Victoria. Later on she represented a model
for Suffragettes and she was also compared to the politician Margaret Thatcher. She stayed well remembered for her courage and success ever since and history considers her to have been a brave heroine today. Her credit for the positive development of fights for the equality of sex is unquestionable.

To compare the story of Boudica, I looked at the situation of women in ancient Greece. They were generally seen as the holders of the households and had no right to vote (despite living in a democratic state) but there were some major and for that time extraordinary actions taken by women. For example in the times after wars when Greece was coping with the poverty women could have various occupations such as sellers, nurses, wool-workers or grape-pickers. During the “Hellenistic” age, they could also own their own slaves or borrow money. But the influence of some women was even bigger, they represented the range “from the divine power of the female gods to the social and religious power of female priests, from the model women of Homer to the anti-heroines of myth and drama, from women who were the power behind the throne to those who wore the crown themselves, from female-enforced prostitution to female-authored sex manuals and poems of literary genius.” And there were another exceptional women in Greece such as Cynisca who was not only able to compete in the Olympic games but also able to win them. Also after her death she stayed celebrated as a heroine. Then there was a remarkable situation in Asia Minor where Queen Artemisia ruled with her husband and also by herself after his death.

A Roman historian Marcus Borealis wrote down his observing of the Celtic society when he was in England. He describes the women as bigger and stronger than the Roman ones. It was due to the fact that they could practice the martial arts and sports and they could also fight in the wars. Roman soldiers wrote about them that they were equal even to Roman men in the fights. The Roman women looked pale in comparison to Celtic women. Alfred Edwards claims that Celtic women realized their superiority to the Roman females. Their bodies were more muscular and averagely taller than Roman women. Also the attitude of the Celtic women was influenced

by their appearance. They thought that Roman women should serve not only to Roman men but also to them and considered them “half women”. Roman women had to serve Celts after they were conquered. A Roman woman called Drusilla described the northern women as giants who had no respect for Roman women or their homes. Romans were forced to leave their homes which Drusilla considered shameful. They were caught by their big arms and although screaming they had no strength to defend themselves. Only one Celtic woman was needed to carry one Roman woman while laughing at her scratching. It was also said that the rules in the Celtic society were different also because of the fighting women. The work that Roman women did was a normal activity done just by the very young and very old people in the Celtic society.18

Among Vikings the women had more respect and freedom than in Greece and other Mediterranean countries. This fact was mostly based on the magic in the culture of Vikings. Women were the ones to practise it. But in the continental Europe German women had not so many rights. When divorcing, men had to pay a penalty but still they could do so whenever they wanted. Women could not inherit lands in this society.19

Romans themselves describe the Celts as much stronger and horrifying. They were frightened and shocked when watching the coming Celts. Their shock caused that they just stood and stared at them and could barely move.20 This kind of thoughts that Romans had implies the way of the Celtic life. While Romans developed their culture and invented many useful things, Celts were not as developed as them but dedicated a bigger part of their lives to practising fighting and defence. But also Celts kept their own culture and traditions. They became famous for their myths and magic but one of the very important aspects of their culture were also the law codes which covered the rights of women more equitably than the codes of many other societies in the period. In the myths, women were the inspiration for creating of various goddesses. There were goddesses of sovereignty or those celebrated as the icons of motherhood. The mother relationship was celebrated. There were also goddesses who represented heroines that were able

to fight in wars. Celtic women did combat so it was logical to have stories about brave supernatural women.21

When compared to the medieval England, Celtic women had more rights and independence.
1.2 The Late Middle Ages

1.2.1 Chivalry

The age of chivalry brought an idea that a war is a noble and admirable thing. In fact, it never was, it was always full of cruelty and dying of not only the soldiers but also of innocent citizens. But Kings needed to keep their lands and interests, that is why there was created this idea to make wars popular and to have people willing to fight for their king. Concretely this habit appeared in times of the reign of Edward III. The knights were considered the symbols of the chivalry. The chivalry as such meant the existence of polite and well-behaved men who are not afraid of wars and who behave nice to other people, especially women. The “code of chivalry” also ordered them to save weak women in need. These days they might be compared to people named heroes. These codes determined how to behave politely to a woman.

1.2.2 Rules of incest in the medieval period

Today, when the word incest is said, people understand it as a sexual relationship or a marriage between two closely related persons. In the Middle Ages this concept was understood differently. It was possible to get married since the age of 12 for women and since 14 for men. The laws, which Church enforced, banned the marriage not only between closest relatives but also between third cousins. Closer marriages were not valid, so it also meant that any descendant would not have the right to inherit. On the other hand, if such a problem arose, it was not possible to divorce. The only possibility was to find reasons for which the marriage could be dissolved.

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1.2.3 Tudors

Henry VIII had access to education, he spoke French, Latin and Spanish. He was also skilful in playing musical instruments and dancing.\textsuperscript{24} Also his wives knew well how to use their abilities and talents.\textsuperscript{25} They also had the access to education and to books. His first wife was Catherine of Aragon and she was intelligent and very well educated. She was also a patron of the humanist movement. She is important also because she supported the education of women. She gave to her daughter Mary a proper education. She was even present by Mary’s lessons, correcting her work. As an adult, she was able to speak more languages. Mary played an important role as a model for her sister Elizabeth, the later Queen of England and Ireland. Catherine even let books for women’s education to be made. She also actively spoke against Luther. After the Henry’s quarrel with the Pope, he married a different woman named Anne Boleyn.\textsuperscript{26} But Catherine defended herself very well. Because of her connections, she had many supporters defending her and she was able to control the public. She was seen as an ideal woman by many other women and Henry’s decision was understood as very unfair and immoral.\textsuperscript{27} She never accepted Anne Boleyn as a rightful queen.\textsuperscript{28} Anne Boleyn was raised mainly in France and did not know Latin as Catherine of Aragon did. Anne was, unlike Catherine, interested in the French version of Bible. But it was also written down by William Laymer that she owned also the English version of the Bible. It would not be fair to say that she had no interest in books because she also owned a number of them. But because of her fluency in French language, she was interested in different books than Catherine. Anne represented a contrast of Catherine also in the matter of Martin Luther whom she supported. She had also a great religious influence. She supported religiously active people that she chose to support and influenced the religious policy of Henry by making him concentrate on the books more. But the same as Catherine, Anne was planning to educate her daughter and supported the students at universities. But her ideas and

\textsuperscript{24} LIPSCOMB, Suzannah. Who was Henry VIII and when did it all go wrong?. \textit{History Today}. 2009, 4, s. 14-20. Dostupný také z WWW: <www.historytoday.com>.


plans were disrupted by her being executed.\textsuperscript{29} Those days adultery was not considered a very big problem for men but when a queen was unfaithful to her husband, it was possible to execute her. And it also happened to Anne Boleyn, she was arrested, judged and then executed for infidelity.\textsuperscript{30} She was also active in the opposition to church. She died in her 36 years.\textsuperscript{31} Other wives of Henry, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard, were not very interested in education, so their benefit remained rather small. For example Anne of Cleves did not speak any other language than her mother tongue, Catherine Howard was even considered illiterate.\textsuperscript{32} But Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard were able to gain the protection for their families by influencing Henry sexually and psychologically.\textsuperscript{33} The next Henry’s wife, Catherine Parr, who was married already twice before marrying Henry\textsuperscript{34}, was also not very much concerned with education. She is believed not to have been educated in her childhood. But still she was one of the few female writers of those times.\textsuperscript{35} On the other hand, she is well known for her religious and politic opinions, which differed from her husband beliefs. His often changing behaviour caused that when the bishop claimed that her beliefs were heresy, it was probably Henry who let his wife arrest. Catherine felt endangered therefore she spoke to Henry about religion again. Afraid, Catherine humbled herself by speaking of herself as of “a poor silly woman, accompanied by all the imperfections natural to the weakness of her sex”.\textsuperscript{36} Henry liked what he heard and let her case be.\textsuperscript{37}
Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had a daughter whose name was Mary. She is well known as the “Bloody Mary” today.\(^{38}\) When taken in general, Mary’s reign was very unsuccessful. Almost everything that she was trying to do was not understood or did not come off well. Her marriage to Philip of Spain had many problems, one of them was the fact that Mary died childless although trying to get pregnant.\(^{39}\) According to David Loades, Mary was already as a child obliged to do a job for which she did not have a suitable temperament. Although seen by the population as an unsuccessful ruler, Mary was the first English Queen. It was a great step forwards in the positive change of women’s position. The reign of Queen Mary was the start in accepting a woman in such a high political position.\(^{40}\)

Another very famous Tudor monarch became, as already mentioned, Elizabeth I who was also the last Tudor monarch.\(^{41}\) Elizabeth was very intelligent and was lucky that Henry VIII wanted his children to be well educated. Elizabeth was a great student.\(^{42}\) While studying she also learned how to be diplomatic very well.\(^{43}\) She was also considered an icon for feminists.\(^{44}\) Elizabeth often met common people. It was a new thing that Tudors showed themselves often among the people. As a new phenomenon it was sometimes criticized.\(^{45}\) But many people believe that it is hard to write any negative statements about her because her reign was mostly great and helped to England very much.\(^{46}\) I can absolutely agree with the opinion that her reign had a positive impact. One of her famous quotations is: “I know I have the body of a weak and

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feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too." This statement impresses many people even today.

1.2.3.1 The life of ordinary women in the Tudor period

In the Tudor England women were certainly not in as good position as today. They were considered inferior to men not just by the conservative ones but also by the progressive ones. Women, in general, were seen as weak and unwise beings controlled mainly by their feelings. In the society, it was also common that the wife had to obey her husband in marriage. And that was not meant just in everyday decisions and the care for the household but also in bed. Whenever the husband wanted, a proper wife should lie to the bed with him. Although these were the codes of the good behaviour, not all the people followed it and believed in it. One of the examples could be Elizabeth Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, who opposed her husband and king by not tolerating his mistress and refusing to divorce. Unmarried women and widows were in a relatively good situation. They were not obliged to listen to any husband and possessed money which they could use how they wanted. The successful ones became patronesses and the educators, too. One of them was Mary, Duchess of Richmond. This explains that women could speak more for themselves than before. One of the important reasons for it was the growth of literacy and spreading of humanism which gave bigger emphasis on education. The position of women was the best of all Europe in this period because they had more freedom in the society. For example, they could talk to foreigners, also to kiss them when greeting. But still they had the social duty to obey their husbands. It was common for women to have on average 8 – 15 children in the era of Tudors and about a half of the children died already during their childhood.

Tim Lambert claims that the description of medieval women as submissive is a myth. For the brave ones it was possible to influence more things than people would think of the women of those times today. In this period, women could not do valued occupations such as doctors, lawyers or teachers. But there were women who could work as bakers, servants or confectioners.

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But for most of women, the common work was in the households. As married, women could only take care for their house and the husband was the one who worked. It was understood as the normality when a husband beat his wife those days. The rule that a woman should obey her husband and see him as a superior person was caused by the hierarchy that worked in the Tudor England. The king or queen was superior to the nation and everyone had to know his or her position and rights. Farmers, both women and men, worked on fields and fed their animals. But a farmer’s wife had also to cook for the family and clean the house. They also took care for the children and had enough knowledge to help an ill member of their family. When a married couple was rich enough to afford servants, husbands were the ones to organize them and to give them money. They were often long gone for work, so women had to be able to organize everything and work by themselves. Rich women could hunt, although it might be surprising for the people living nowadays. But it was completely normal that women did not go to school at all. They could be educated only at home and they learnt mostly only the practical information usable for their future adult life. But the rich ones learned also to dance, the music and embroidery. But it was normal not only for women not to go to school but also for most of men during the childhood. But it was possible for women to learn as adult from their husbands or the local priests. For both sexes in the middle and the richest classes it was common that marrying someone because of love was a privilege which almost no one was given. For everyone the most suitable and profitable marriage was arranged. But the poorest people had almost no chance to marry someone richer because no one richer would agree with such a marriage. So it was possible to marry because of love for such people. In the end there was one positive thing for the poor people. Although they had to face many problems of the time, they had a bigger chance for a satisfactory relationship.

Henry VIII started controlling the Church of England by the English Reformation to gain more money. He took the money from the Church and closed 560 monasteries. Many women had worked as nuns in such monasteries but they no longer had such option. After the Reformation, adult women who were unmarried could no longer work as nuns, they could hope only for an occupation as a servant because there was no other tolerable occupation for them.

Those who did not gain such occupation had only one possibility not to stay homeless. Only their own family could take care of them otherwise they could only be beggars without roof over their heads.52

1.2.4 Stuarts

In the period when the Stuart monarchs ruled Britain, it became more common to see women that had their first child around the age of twenty-five or even twenty-seven. The result of this was that lesser children were born. The monarchs ruled more severely than Tudors and this model was transmitted also to family life. Wives had to obey their husbands duly.53 They were seen as a part of a man’s property. He was a superior figure to his wife, children and servants like a governor. Family played an important role of a basic unit of the social life because it functioned as a similarity to the King and his subjects. Women had to take care for the household perfectly which included cooking but also the basic knowledge in medicine.54 It was believed that children were born with a sinful will therefore they were beaten.55 It was still not possible for women to hold such functions as teachers, lawyers or doctors. But it was conceivable to see women working as domestic servants, shoemakers, embroiderers, bakers or confectioners. But the majority of women were still housewives. The life of women was very similar to the 16th century women’s life.56

In Scotland women were more equal to the male population than in England, they did not fear to confront men and the government. At this time, Scotland was more educated than England and also religion provided more freedom for people.57

In 1632 The Laws Resolution was released in order to inform women about the influence of the law on their lives. It dealt with the situation of unmarried and married women and widows. It described the laws that determined the matters of property and marriage and how effectively women used them in their lives. They were guided by men their whole life. At first by their fathers and then by husbands and they did not care about the laws in detail. But the laws mainly kept women down because it was allowed to beat wives. Widows had a certain amount of freedom but their fortune was attractive for many men.\(^{58}\)

In the 17\(^{th}\) century witches were hunted. Matthew Hopkins did that those days, for example. But it is believed today that he accused the women because he wanted to gain more power and influence. There are terrifying numbers, he accused hundreds of women of witchcraft. There were over 300 hundred women accused and over one hundred burnt in East Anglia in only two years. Witchfinders came into existence, they were searching and revealing the witches. Not only them but also midwives, witnesses, jurors and police constables belonged to the people who hunted the witches.\(^{59}\) But it is more accurate to say they accused innocent women of witchcraft. The paranoia of believing that witches exist has its roots in Christianity. It was believed that next to God there exists also the Devil. And whoever was allied with the Devil was called a witch. There were things seen as evil but it is not the same nowadays. The difference between magic and witchcraft was hard to set.\(^{60}\) The hunting of the witches was supported by the Puritans who believed that God has chosen them to punish those who would join the Devil. But the reputation of Matthew Hopkins went quickly down after the Restoration when he was named a zealot. It was a politically needed action because the hunting of witches was endangering the peace.\(^{61}\)

One of the accused women was Jane Wenham. It was an old woman who was an outsider of her village. Her neighbours did not like her and overlooked her. She was quarrelsome and cursed them which was her greatest pity. She was accused of witchcraft and stripped during the trial because it was believed that witches have a devil’s mark on their body. There were also


other tests to find that out. The accused person had to read the Lord’s Prayer without a slip of the tongue. She was threatened by the execution more times and finally she gave up and admitted to all the accusations. She was the last woman who was sentenced to death due to the law released in 1604.62

1.3 Modern Times

1.3.1 18th century

In the 18th century, the rich women were not supposed to interfere with more serious matters of society than parties in London and other similar things, so they called their lives rather boring.63

Children were no more treated as small adults. Parents started to consider them as different from adults and respected their specific needs. But this still did not affect clothing very much. Little girls had to wear corsets and eat as little as they could to keep a slim waist. The parents were still the ones to decide about their children’s wedding. In the industrial age, new factories were built but common people were very poor, even small children in the age of seven had to work there.64

For many centuries, servants were considered subordinate to their masters in every aspect, not only professionally. In the 17th and 18th century, it was very often to see a pregnant servant who had to have sex with her master just because of the fear of losing the job. Many women could not have any career and had to stay with their husband. Working as a servant was a way to have a career. But the lives of the maidservants included negative aspects. They were often humiliated by their masters. Well, there were also maids who used sex as a tool to get advantage. Some lied at court to get new clothes. Mary Brown had a child with her master and blackmailed him for years. Of course, he did not want her to tell anyone. The masters who were abusing their maidservants usually did not want the secret to become public. But although it was secret, the masters often told the servants that sexual intercourse is a part of their job.65

The famous women did not have it easy. The same as today’s famous people are exposed in the tabloids and their affairs and divorces are the themes that interest people, also in the 18th century the famous people had to face this information market. There were gossips spread or

songs composed about famous people or about prostitutes. Also the magazines released such information.\textsuperscript{66}

\section*{1.3.2 19\textsuperscript{th} century}

The 19\textsuperscript{th} century meant a great change for the life in Britain. The Industrial Revolution changed many things. In this period the work understood as an occupation started to be divided from the work at home. The industrial life was developing mainly in the towns. As it was possible for the prominent women to become writers in the Tudor England, some of them wrote also in 19\textsuperscript{th} century. But still the 80\% of the population belonged to the working class. The middle class women stayed at home and organised the household as proper wives and they could also take part in charity and the working class women worked very hard. In the countryside people worked on farms and in towns they worked mostly in the factories. The working class could not afford electricity or modern instruments, that is one of the reasons why the life was much harder for them than for the families which could afford this luxury. But there was a big improvement in education. Working class girls were given the education in churches and schools. But it was not earlier than in 1870 when the state started providing them. Also the Oxford University allowed women to study here. Of course it would be too early to think that they could also gain the degrees. This right became valid in 1920.

Women were separated from men at the University, there were built new halls for them. In this period also sports were available for women, for example, they could practise the archery. It was even considered to be a ladylike activity. Other sports included tennis, croquet or bicycling. During the reign of Tudors, it was not possible for women to become doctors which changed in 19\textsuperscript{th} century. There were a couple of women who could become doctors. The one right that women were those days fighting for was the right to vote. For those who were well-situated it became possible to vote in the local elections. The first year of the voting of women

was 1869. Scottish women were also in this century more independent than the English ones which was throughout the British history.

One new luxury for many people were marriages decided by the marrying ones, that meant that they could marry for love and did not have to marry someone ordered by their family. But it was hard to divorce and the property that the pair brought to the marriage became just the husband’s material possession. Women could also go to work but they were paid less money than men.

The monarch ruling in the 19th century was the Queen Victoria. She remained very famous because of the way she reigned. She became Queen when she was 18. When young she was energetic, we know her as an indifferent matron from her later years. She was the daughter of the Duke of Kent and Victoire. But Victoria was not even a year old when her father died. Her mother with her partner moved to England and they forced Victoria to be raised as a person who was never alone, the duchess even forced her to sleep in the same room. She also made her live in a strict routine. Victoria was supposed to become an obedient servant. But Victoria wanted to escape and when she became Queen she finally could. She spent the time with her minister and not with her mother. Her mother even had to write an asking permission to get to see her daughter. But Victoria was satisfied. Britain was a great empire at the start of her reign. It had the most developed industry in the world and London was the largest city in the world. But Victoria helped the empire further. During her reign the expanse of her kingdom grew, so that at the end of the 19th century Britain became the largest kingdom in the world, because the colonies and British isles covered one quarter of the world’s surface. But also the population of the kingdom made the quarter of all the people living in the world those days. The

reason for all this were wars and conquests led by the British Queen. It was believed that she did not have such a big impact on the government but in fact, her impact was bigger than thought. She could persuade the government even to the most important issues. Queen Victoria was not severe in the matter of religion. She also insisted that the government proclaimed the religious toleration. She also tried to raise the royal privileges so that the reputation of the monarch would improve. With her husband Albert she succeeded to do so. She represented the happy family with her husband and 9 children. As a skilful monarch and also a good mother, she represented also the icon of a woman able to take care for her household and career both.

1.3.3 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century

When the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century began, powerful and prestigious issues were still in the hands of men. Women were already allowed to study, though. But it was very expensive of course, so only rich women would afford to study.

Problems with changing the women’s position were influenced by the general perspective on women. They were seen as more moral than men. It was not necessarily true in the reality, though. Women were supposed to be the moral models in families. But on the other hand, one of the problematic issues of this time was the general lack of morality.

Women started to debate about birth control which was considered immoral those days. Still, many women felt that they did not have the right to decide about the size of their family. Church saw such ideas as a sin because they believed it was a murder. Any material propagating birth control was understood as obscene and also government controlled it. It was understandable

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that women started thinking about it because it would not be possible to live a free life they were fighting for if they stayed at home and took care for many children.\textsuperscript{76}

At the beginning of the century the position of women started to change radically because women wanted to live as inferior to men no longer.\textsuperscript{77} They demanded not only to study but also to have the chance to do professional occupations.\textsuperscript{78} They could already study, so it was also the time when a female doctor or a lawyer appeared. Because if they could not do prestigious occupations, their studies would be wasted. They started to be more radical than ever before. One of the movements that was a result of this were suffragettes and their organizations. They became notorious before the World War I. But the war stopped the protests for a while. But not for long. The war meant a step forward for the right to vote. In 1917 the House of Commons supported the People Bill’s women’s suffrage which amazed the suffragettes. It is argued that more than the work of women during the World War I, it were the activities of suffragettes before the war that made Parliament release such a law.\textsuperscript{79} In 1929 it started to be possible to become a politician when Margareth Bonfield became the cabinet minister. It also became more common to see women work as policewomen, lawyers, veterinary surgeons or civil servants. In 1938 even a female branch of the army was established. The war meant that women had to work instead of men. War cannot be taken as anything positive but there was a positive impact on women who realized that they could do all the work men could. But the majority of them was still at the household after the World War I.\textsuperscript{80} In 1950s, women could study because they had the right to do so. But as Jenni Murray claims, it was not as ideal as thought. She felt the reality was still not very good. The access to education was still not equal. In 1944 The Education Act was released. It brought free education for all children from primary to secondary level. When they reached the age of 11, it was possible to go to a grammar school. But an article called “Girls Brainier than Boys” released in 1954 informed about girls passing the exams more often than


boys. This resulted in limiting the numbers of passing girls by the authorities. In those grammar schools where these restrictions were not, two thirds of the students were girls. In the half of the century it became more and more common for women to have their own career and at the end of the century it was finally taken as normal. But that was not everything, women were also fighting for having the same wages as men and they reached it in 1973 when it was legislated. There were more goals that women reached in this century. For example, the Sex Discrimination Act was released and it was forbidden to receive a notice because of pregnancy. Many of such laws released in that period were not perfect but they represented a framework which enabled more changes and improvements to come. It was also no longer so hard to take care for the household because a great technical development came and many devices easing the work at home were invented. Mostly cooking, cleaning and washing the laundry was sped up.

Although the situation is not perfect for some women even today, these were the things that made it more possible for women to have their own career and to take care for the household. The luckier ones have husbands who are willing to help them. But when women fought strongly for their fights and freedoms, some men were not very pleased by this. The changes in the basic relationship between women and men were quick and not very expected by men. It caused arguments. Men were also laughing at the new hopes of women. But today most of them already stopped ridiculing those hopes. Women achieved big improvements throughout the 20th century, indeed.

2 Organizations and fights of women for equality

Centuries ago, it was possible to beat women and to lock them in rooms like prisoners, they also could not own possessions, all they were given by parents became husband’s after the marriage. Furthermore, it was not possible for them to divorce. They themselves were seen as a part of a man’s property. This lasted until the 19th century when women were given the right to vote in 1870, a couple of them could even study at English universities. Middle-class women required the equality in rights because that was related to their life. On the other hand, women from working class called for better working conditions. In 1897 women even required to have the right to vote in national elections. Also during the First World War, women had to do work which was typical for men because men were fighting and they proved that they could do any occupation or other things that also men could, they started to be insistent, so the improvement of women’s rights was inevitable. 86

The fights for the women’s rights would never be as effective as they were if women did not establish associations and new ideologies, such as feminism.

2.1 Feminism

Feminism is an ideology which was developing very slowly over centuries. It was not united in one definition and as it developed among different women, also different kinds of feminism and opinions appeared. Today, we distinguish between liberal, material and radical feminism. Some writers were also discussing the female gender and its role.

In the 18th century the position of women started to be discussed among rich people in European towns more often. Already in these times, it was clear what women wanted a change. The main points included their opportunity to study, to vote, to have the right to own a property, to work and to be paid equal wages and also to have independence. These were the liberal principles of feminism. There were also feminist writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Marian

Evans or Harriet Taylor. Harriet Taylor was a philosopher and was one of the first to advocate the rights of women in the 19th century. She emphasized the education and its importance not just for men but also for women because she saw the better future that it could bring to the future generations. She also wanted women to have the same occupations as men had; and the lives of both sexes to be united. The different spheres of life in which each sex lived separated people not just in life but also mentally. The feminism started spreading faster in the second half of the 19th century. It was concentrated on the citizen and political rights. Also suffragettes started to appear in this period. Working-class women were demanding better working conditions. During the wars in the 20th century, they proved that they could do the work which was done by men in the periods of piece. This was also one of the reasons why material feminism spread and the demands of women were overlookable no longer. They were also fighting against the opinion that men were seen as the “productive part” and women as the “reproductive one” and their work at the households was considered less important. Radical feminists wanted also to substitute men as the dominant social elements and to become dominant themselves. They were bothered with the patriarchal society. But they are still not very positive about the future changes in society. Some women also focus on the fact that their gender gives them the opportunity to give or not to give life and that this fact makes them superior in this matter.

2.2 Suffragettes

To explain the reason of birth of the Suffragettes, I must talk about the right to vote and to hold public functions. The movement of Suffragettes was invented exactly for increasing the chance of women to get these rights.


The organizations of so-called Suffragettes were established and developed mainly in the 20th century. At the end of the 19th century in 1897, the first British organization called the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was created. This organization was not as radical as the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) that was created six years later. The suffragettes from this organization even broke the law and faced imprisonment. They were also striking. Terminologically, they could be even called terrorists as CJ Bearman thinks. They saw themselves as fighters for freedom and their actions were not supposed to be seen as aggressive but as defensive. The WSPU attacked Liberal meetings and threatened people. There were injured people and one dead policeman in the end. But their demands were not fulfilled. Today, people see them as heroes and victims but that was definitely not the true for the people living in those days. They were hated for their aggressive behaviour very much. Many people would see it the same way today because the suffragettes were not afraid to threaten by using bombings and poisons. There were some radicals willing to do such a thing but it was just a small amount of them. Most of them would not be really able to hurt people. But in Scotland, where women had always more rights than in England, the Suffragettes were also more popular.

There were also peaceful ways of fighting for the rights. Some Suffragettes started the hunger strikes. But the government tried to solve this by feeding the women by force, using cannula in their noses. Suffragettes reacted on this by claiming that such a behaviour was brutal and humiliating. Women also tied themselves to railways, broke windows or put things on fire. But the World War I stopped the protests. The contribution of women and also suffragettes during the war were undeniable. Women started to succeed in their fight for the women’s suffrage in 1918. That year the first female MP was elected. At the end of the war, women over 30 gained the right to vote and ten years later already 21 years old women could

vote.\textsuperscript{96} The situation was not the same for the whole Britain. In smaller villages women did not have any opportunity to participate on the protests. For some areas it lasted even until the 1980s.\textsuperscript{97}

### 2.3 The Women’s Party

This party was founded in 1917. Its main representatives were Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. The goals of the party were to try to defeat Germany in the World War I and to make the war measures more strict to be able to use less food. They also wanted food kitchens to be founded in the UK. Another point of their interest during the war was to transfer the majority of industrial production to the sectors that were needed for war. Those were mines and factories producing weaponry.\textsuperscript{98} These points do not seem fighting for women’s rights very much because also other parties would promote such treaties. But there were differences because the Women’s Party also promoted points such as equal payment for women for the same work that men did, marriage, divorce laws and parental rights to children that would be equal for both sexes. Party demanded the equality of sexes also in public services. They realized that it consumed time and money to raise a child and so they also wanted benefits for mothers. In 1918 seventeen women were candidates for the party but none of them was elected. But there was one positive thing. In the elections, where Christabel Pankhurst stood as a candidate, she gained many votes and she was close to win.\textsuperscript{99}

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The progress of fashion since 1760

In the matter of improving the situation of women and their becoming equal to men there was also a change in women’s clothing. The change of clothing went along with the social change. The emancipation of women caused that they started dressing more and more like men to prove the equality even in this field of living. I investigate the periods of the biggest changes in detail in the following chapters.

3.1 The Rococo period 1760 - 1789

The artistic style of Rococo arose in France and it is sometimes called “the age of elegance”. There are doubts if Rococo is an art, it was not accepted well by the historians until the 19th century. It was considered trivial. But it is recognised a major period of fashion and also other arts in Europe today. Light fabrics like silk, satin or damask were used. Their colours were also light. The floral motives were common. A very typical feature of this period were the hair styles of women. The shapes were resembling even little towers because they were worn as high as possible. There had to be invented proper chairs to make it possible to sit comfortably with such long hairstyles. Wigs were used to create very high hairdos. Also men wore wigs but not as high as women did. The wigs were made from “human hair, the hair of horses, cows, goats, foxes” or from textiles. Sometimes even metals were used to make it possible for the wig to hold its long shape. The head was also often decorated by feathers.

In the 1760s, open robe and sack started to be altered. One of the possibilities was to wear such a robe with a high wig. The open robe had an upper skirt which was short and tied so that the petticoat was uncovered completely. The dress would be very rich and decorative,
usually worn without any raiment. Such dresses were used for Polonaise dancing.\textsuperscript{105} (appendix nr. 1)

The cult of big hips of women was present in this period. These signs of femininity were very popular. The difference between the clothes of women and men signified also the difference of understanding the roles that men and women had. Women’s clothes was rich and decorative and made something similar to a decorative object from them but such inconvenient dresses signified how the rich women lived at those times. We can deduct that they did not do sports and did not participate in serious matters such as politics. They looked simply like a “walking decoration”.

\section*{3.2 The second Rococo 1840-1870}

In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the clothing was made lighter. It was very fashionable to have small waists and women wore corsets because of that. But women started to wear underwear at the beginning of that century that was more similar to today’s underwear than ever before.\textsuperscript{106}

A hundred years later from the Rococo period, the skirts were already not as rich as the previous ones. The day dress was simpler. It was possible for a lady to wear a V-neckline or a round one. The skirt was usually long, the petticoat was hidden completely. Cotton stockings were worn to stay warm under the skirts. Outside, it was common to wear also a decorative or a rather simple bonnet.\textsuperscript{107} (appendix nr. 2) Another variant of an outdoor dress was a double-breasted coat. The coat could be made with sleeves that narrowed by shoulders but got wider by the wrists. Men still used less complicated clothing. For the outside stay, they wore trousers and double-breasted coats. In the evening it was possible to wear rich skirts that were shorter than the underskirts, both nicely decorated. Feathers were no longer used those days, hair was adorned by flowers. The sleeves were used rather shorter for the social evenings.\textsuperscript{108} (appendix nr. 3)

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The women’s clothing was becoming lighter and lighter very slowly. The improvements of the situation of women’s rights and opportunities (for example studying) in the industrial England made it necessary for the clothes to be lighter.

3.3 Victorian Era 1870 - 1900

Women started to dare to practise activities that were not meant for women to do as many people believed. They started to practice sports such as fencing, cycling, playing tennis or also boating. Such activities required different clothes, simpler and more convenient. Also more practical materials such as wool or velveteen were used. Also another practical accessories were worn, for example parasols, gloves or fans belonged here. In the name of practicality, completely new approaches to fashion were accepted. The dresses transformed into costumes which had manly features, such as bow-ties, hats and collar. Also the fashion of men changed. Men started using ready-made bow-ties and ties because of its practicality. They also started wearing creased trousers in the 1890s. It lasted a longer time for the trousers to become accepted, though.¹⁰⁹

For the social evenings, it was possible for women to wear a dress with a high collar and a V-shaped neckline. A narrow skirt was very fashionable in this era. Overskirts were usually worn almost as long as the petticoats.¹¹⁰ (appendix nr. 4)

It also slowly became easier to take care for the clothes because the electric iron was invented. But the usage of the iron spread since the 1930s.¹¹¹

3.4 Early Twentieth Century 1900-1920

This era is significant for the influence of Orient. The credits are given to Paul Poiret. But the clothing had to become much more practical with the start of the World War I. Except the

Oriental influence, there originated also another famous style in these years.\textsuperscript{112} In the evening, short kimono sleeves were worn.\textsuperscript{113} Clothing creating an S-figure was called Gibson girl and it was the first clothing that was not produced as originals but mass manufactured. Expensive coats were made of velvet, silk, damask or satin. It was no problem to wear rich furs on the coat in this period. In the WWI, small hats started to be worn instead of the large ones.\textsuperscript{114}

The skirts were already very narrow when comparing to those worn in the Rococo period. Outdoor, ladies could wear calf-length tailored coats. It was still possible to wear a bigger hat for these moments. It was also frequent to wear high collars for going outdoor. Men often wore a motoring costume which was common those days.\textsuperscript{115} (appendix nr. 5)

Also Russian style influenced Europe. The Russian coats could be three-quarter length.\textsuperscript{116} We can see such a coat on the enter figure in the appendix nr. 6.

But something revolutionary happened in fashion in 1913. It was the invention of the bra. The inventor Mary Crosby just tied together two handkerchiefs. At the beginning of the century, the skirts, although narrow, were still long because it was not acceptable for women to show legs. But the skirts were sometimes so narrow that they got the name “hobble skirts” because it was not possible even to walk normally in them, let alone to try to run. It was not only the hats that became more practical by the start of the World War I, clothes in general also became more practical.\textsuperscript{117}


3.5 Twentieth century since 1920 until today

The underwear was much larger in 1920s than as we know it today. The knickers ended by the knee and not at the beginning of legs. But women started to wear shorter and shorter models in the 20s that ended in the half of thighs. Also the skirts became shorter in this decade, even to the knees.\textsuperscript{118} It might not seem so much amazing today but it was the first time in history when a decent woman could show her legs. This trend continued in the World War II when it was necessary to save the material. Christian Dior thought a new style up. His long skirts created the look of the hour glass. It cannot be omitted that a year earlier, in 1946, the famous bikini was invented. The trend of using less and less material stayed and in 1965 Mary Quant introduced the mini skirt.\textsuperscript{119} In the public places such as studios of broadcasting, there were companies that forbid wearing of trousers or miniskirts. One of them was also BBC.\textsuperscript{120}

A big change happened for all people in the 1950s. The possibility to start wearing really anything one could think of was supported by the discovery of teenagers. The raising of children was changing throughout the history. There were also times when they were treated like small adults. But it was slowly getting better and their life changed the most by the new cult of teenagers in the half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It was the idea that life of adolescents was different than the life and mind of adults. It was developing already in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, though. Teenagers created something that could be called a new culture. They chose specific clothes and music which most of adults did not like. They had enough freedom to decide what to listen or to wear deliberately. It was also the time of an economical boom, so they had enough money to spend on such hobbies.\textsuperscript{121} The position of women was better and they were included in the new phenomenon the same as men.


Conclusion

The topic I have chosen was very interesting for me. In my first chapter I found out that Celtic women were equal to men in their society. They were even celebrated through the female Goddesses. The Celtic tribes spent a lot of time fighting and women could fight in wars and do sports. It was common that when they were fighting in wars, young and old members of tribes were able to take care for ordinary tasks themselves. Women were big and strong warriors. They could own property, had rights for their defense. They could hold public positions and even to rule the tribes.

In the period of the reign of Tudors, kings, queens and rich and prominent persons had the access to education. Common and poor people could not go to school, even the majority of men did not have education. In Tudor and also in Stuart England, women were seen as inferior to men, they had to obey and when not, it was normal that they were beaten. This system of society supposed that everyone knew where his or her position was and it was very rare to change it. During the reign of Stuarts, paranoia of existing witches scared people and innocent women were accused and burnt for witchcraft.

In the 18th century, England became an industrial country. Rich women led relatively boring lives and the majority of ordinary women were obliged to stay at home and take care for children and the household. Few women could work. But when a woman worked as a servant, she was very probable to be raped by her master. In the 19th century, the situation was getting better and first ideas of independent women, equal to men, started to spread effectively. At the beginning of the 20th century feminism started spreading really fast and suffragettes fought for right to vote but also for many other rights. Throughout the 20th century, the demands of women could no longer be ignored and the position of women was improving in all its features.

Feminism had liberal, material and radical ideas and women wished for themselves to be accepted as equal to men, to achieve all the rights and opportunities that men had, to have the chance to work, to vote or to hold prominent public functions. Also suffragettes were fighting for these ideas. They concentrated mainly on the right to vote and their methods of fight were sometimes brutal. Sometimes they threatened to harm people or started hunger strikes.

Fashion was strict in the matter of nakedness for centuries. Long, rich skirts covering whole legs of women were compulsory. The biggest change came along with the fights for rights of women. They started to wear simpler clothes, narrow skirts and also trousers which was a sign
of the masculinity for centuries. In the 20th century the progress in women’s emancipation went hand in hand with the raising possibility to wear whatever one wanted. It was also supported by the start of the existence of teenagers.
Bibliography

Books:


Articles from magazines:


Internet sources:


Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3
**Resumé**

Ve své bakalářské práci se zabývám vývojem změny postavení žen v britské společnosti. V kapitole věnované Keltům jsem popsala keltskou společnost. Ženy zde měly postavení rovné postavení mužů, dokonce byly obdivovány v podobě bohyň, které patřily ke keltské mytologii. Mohly bojovat ve válkách, vládnout kmenům, měly uzákoněná práva pro vlastní ochranu a mohly vlastnit majetek.

Za vlády Tudorovců existoval propastný rozdíl mezi možnostmi významných a bohatých žen a chudých, obyčejných poddaných. Bohaté ženy se mohly vzdělávat, kdežto chudé ke vzdělání neměly přístup. Předpokládalo se, že zůstanou v domácnosti u výchovy dětí. Respekt ovšem u mužů neměly ani vysoce postavené ženy. Ženství jako takové bylo považováno za existenci s mnoha pocity, ovšem ne s rozumem. Za vlády Stuartovců i po celé 18. století mohlo malé procento žen pracovat například jako služka, ale byly často sexuálně zneužívány. Také se v této době konaly hony na čarodějnice.


Změna postavení žen se také projevila v módně, kdy největší změny proběhly souběžně s obdobími, kdy ženy bojovaly za svá práva nejintenzivněji. Začaly nosit úzké sukně a také kalhoty, které byly dříve znakem mužství. Později ve 20. století bylo možné se stále častěji oblékat vskutku libovolně. Také vznik a rozšíření směru, který udávali teenageři, se na možnosti oblécí si libovolné šaty, podepsal.
### Anotace

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<th>Jméno a příjmení:</th>
<th>Kamila Dudková</th>
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<td>Anglického jazyka</td>
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<td>Vedoucí práce:</td>
<td>PhDr. Světlana Obenausová, Ph.D.</td>
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<td>How did the position of women change throughout the British history?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anotace práce:</td>
<td>Ve své práci jsem se zabývala vývojem postavení žen a jeho změnou v průběhu historie Velké Británie. Zaměřila jsem se na několik období, která jsem považovala za významná, a sice charakteristiku postavení žen ve starověku, středověký život žen a také moderní období. V každém období jsem se zabývala společenskými i uzákoněnými pravidly, která ovlivňovala život žen. Tato období jsem srovnávala. Také jsem se zabývala organizacemi, které bojovaly za práva žen.</td>
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<td>In my bachelor work, I occupied myself with the position of women and its changing throughout the history of Great Britain. I focused on a couple of periods which I considered significant, namely on the characteristic of the position of women in ancient history, medieval period and modern history. I concerned myself with the social rules and laws which influenced the life of women in each period. I compared these periods. I also wrote about the organizations which fought for the rights of women.</td>
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| Rozsah práce: | 47 stran |
| Jazyk práce: | Anglický |