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LIFE OF WOMEN IN BRITAIN THROUGHOUT CENTURIES

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedeníh pramenů a literatury.

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Jarmila Halamová

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ABSTRACT

I have always been fascinated by position of women throughout history. In my bachelor thesis I have done a survey covering this theme in all historical periods from prehistoric times until today. Primarily, I focused on women in the family and in work but I was also dealing with education and changing social status of women. Interestingly, I found out that women enjoyed more respect and recognition in ancient history than in the Middle Ages when their position noticeably worsen. It was not before the 20th century that women gained adequate position in all spheres of their lives.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As the title suggests, the goal of my bachelor thesis is to look into lives of women in the past in Britain. I was interested in the position of woman in every historical period so I decided to cover them all in sequence beginning with prehistoric times and ending with modern era.

In the earliest times, the Stone Age, my work concentrates on woman as a mother – the goddess of fertility and on the fact that matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy and the causes for this. In the Celtic society women enjoyed freedom and partnership what was changed in the Roman times when women's role was a child bearer, mother and wife and I will examine why this changed again in the Anglo – Saxon times. The Middle Ages meant a dark period for women and I am describing the changes in society which led to total inferior of women to men. I examine position, rights and education of women in the Tudor and Stuart Britain when female disobedience was seen as the act against God. The Industrial revolution and its impact on working opportunities for women is the next object for my investigation as well as the pressure exerted on women to fulfil the model of respectable married woman with a large family in Victorian times. The last chapters are primarily focused on the law changes, what led to these changes, their impact on different spheres of women's lives and their practical realization.

Mainly, I focus on the family life and work of women and also distinguishing the deal of women of different classes. It is clear that life could not be the same for rich upper – class woman and poor working - class woman. My aim is to learn new information through my survey of changing status of women in history of Britain and to clarify why women were so many times in history oppressed and treated as inferior beings by men.

II. THE INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS OF THE RESEARCH

II.1. EARLIEST TIMES

II.1.1. Stone Age

People lived in the area that we call Britain around 250,000 BC. Nevertheless, it was not until 50,000 BC when a new type of modern human appeared because the weather became less cold and more pleasant.¹

In everyday struggle with diluvial nature the groups of palaeolithic people naturally dividing work to men's work and women's work were formed. Men were hunting and fishing, women were taking care of descendants, keeping the fire, preparing meal and gathering food, like nuts, fruits, berries, leaves from wild sources. A woman had a leading position because she reproduced the human race and protected fire. The instinct to preserve a mankind was reflected in the cult of mother – the goodness of fertility. From this period we know so called 'palaeolithic Venus figures'. Women were so important to the communities that artists would carve their pictures from stone or wood.² (appendix nr. 1)

Over the thousands of years there were periods both of extreme cold and warm. When the last ice age around 10,000 BC came to its end, Britain cut off from Europe around 6,000 BC.³ The character of nature changed too. Diluvial flora and fauna were gradually replaced by forest steppe. Because of the existence of the new conditions of nature the progress had to lead to agriculture and animal husbandry. By this time people began to domesticate animals, mainly dogs. Cattle breeding provided beside meat and

¹ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. Earliest Times, s. 3 – 4.

² MRÁZ, Bohumír. *Dějiny výtvarné kultury I*. 4.vydání. IDEA SERVIS, 2002, s. 12 – 15.

³ PRYOR, Francis. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-05]. Overview: From Neolithic to Bronze Age, 8000 – 800 BC. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british_prehistory/overview_british_prehistory_01.shtml.

milk other important raw materials for workmanship such as leather and wool. The need to preserve food, especially corn, led to production of pottery and efforts to improve clothing led to weaving. However, increasing importance of men in agriculture and cattle grazing caused that matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy. In Neolithic period the megalithic monumental architecture so-called 'henge' monuments rose.¹ The most famous is Stonehenge located in the English county of Wiltshire. The first bronze artefacts appeared in Britain around 2,500 BC. The new arrivals, known as Beaker people, because of the shape of their drinking pottery vessels, settled in Britain. It was during the Bronze Age that individual chief or king gained importance in comparison with Neolithic Age which was focused on community. Patriarchal society remained in the Bronze Age in Britain.²

II.1.2. The Celts

The age of Celts in Britain is referred to as the Iron Age. The Celts were gradually arriving to the area of Britain from around 700 BC till the Roman invasion of 43 AD. The Celts brought a technological innovation which allowed British to make better weapons and tools from iron.³ Hierarchy was one of the signs of Celtic society. There was not political unity among them and fighting was not unusual.⁴ Even though for the highest political functions were chosen men, an interesting fact is that women could become a chief of the tribe and could also fight in a war. The most famous and strongest female Celt was Boudicca. She led her tribe in the bloody revolt against

¹ MRÁZ, Bohumír. *Dějiny výtvarné kultury 1*. 4.vydání. IDEA SERVIS, 2002, s. 14 – 17.

² ROSS, David. *Britain Express* [online]. Cheltenham : 1996 [cit. 2011-03-8] Bronze Age Britain c. 2500 – 600 B.C.Dostupné z WWW: http://www.britainexpress.com/History/Bronze_Age.htm.

³ RICHARDS, Julian. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-8]. Overview: Iron Age, 800 BC – AD 43. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british_prehistory/overview_british_prehistory_ironage_01.shtml.

⁴ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-05]. Prehistoric England. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/prehistengland.html>.

Roman in 61 AD and almost won. As a proof there are written records praising the strength of Celtic women left from Roman writers.¹

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote that there was no difference in leadership between men and women.² In addition to traditional female occupations, women could become druids, including priestesses, poets, and healers. They were allowed to start their own business without independently on their husbands. They also could and did serve as diplomats in political and military issues. As far as the family life is concerned, women's rights and positions were clearly laid down, too. Marriage between man and woman was more like a partnership. They could both choose whom to marry, though among noblewomen marriages were influenced by families. There was a custom to bring an equal dowry into marriage for each spouse. If one of the partners died the surviving partner would get his or her original contribution. If they divorced each would get the share he or she brought into the marriage and its profits. Women were independent to own and inherit property within the marriage. And this independence ensured them protection in case of divorce or husband's death. Divorce was not complicated and either man or woman could request it. It was not a shame for woman to be divorced and she could remarry if she wanted.³ Despite the fact that woman could own property and decide plenty of things, large and valuable items she had to discuss with her husband and wait for his permission. A crime against a woman was highly punished. It was thought as a crime against her guardian to whom the penalty had to be paid. Interestingly, killing a woman was thought to be worse than killing a man and penalties for this were extreme. In this point of view, we can say that women were

¹ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. Earliest Times, s. 8.

² LONIGAN, R. Paul. *Aislingmagazine* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-10]. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM32/ethical/womencelts.html>.

³ SAVINO, Payne. *Celtlearn* [online]. 2002 [cit. 2011-03-10]. The Lives Of Ancient Celtic Women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.celtlearn.org/educationalservices.php#tp>.

really very well protected against violence. But women did not have more independence and rights until the 20th century than during the Celtic period.¹

II.1.3. The Romans

When we look at ancient sources for women we can see that they are all secondary and were written by men. Roman history books rarely mention women, but we can gain some information also from Roman tombstones, paintings and sculptures.² The ancient Romans were very patriarchal with men holding all the power. Women and children did not have many rights. It is unknown what Roman women thought and felt about most political issues. They were considered citizens but were not allowed to vote or to participate in political activities though they were supposed to support their husband or father belief. Women were usually already married by the time they were twelve years old because the life expectancy was between twenty or thirty years, if they had a luck. Women of all economic levels and social positions shared one inevitable duty to bear a child. They were expected to have as many children as possible because no one could be sure how many children would survive. Therefore, girls got married very young and often died when giving childbirth or because they were too weakened from continuous pregnancy and childbearing. High class families demanded male children to carry on their names and lineage so women were perpetually pregnant. On the other hand, women from lower classes were not expected to have so many children because they would be unable to support them all.³

Roman women enjoyed very similar education as men in the early childhood. Sons and daughters of rich Romans learnt reading, writing and simple arithmetic in

¹ LONIGAN, R. Paul. *Aislingmagazine* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-10]. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM32/ethical/womencelts.html>.

² DIXON, Suzanne. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-13]. Roman women: following the clues. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman_women_01.shtml.

³ MASON, K. Moya. *Ancient Roman Women: A Look at Their Lives* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-13] Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.moyak.com/papers/roman-women.html>.

primary schools. However, only sons could attend secondary schools to learn geometry, history, oratory and literature.¹ Despite the fact that the main role of women in Roman times was child-bearing, women were also important when raising the children. A girl learned to spin, weave and sew from her mother.

It was more than usual that women had a legal guardian because they were not considered smart enough. They had to know their place in the society and the family, should remain modest, tireless and be loyal and obedient to their families. This was an ideal woman for a Roman man. The prescribed role for woman within Roman society was clear: child bearer, mother, daughter and wife. Lower class women would work but upper class women had to fulfill the expectations of their families and stay at home. There were some expectations, but in general, none of the women had their own identities or personal choices.

Within families fathers had an absolute control over their daughters' lives and could even sell them into slavery or force them to get a divorce. If women were divorced or the marriage was dissolved, women had no legal rights over her children and may never see them again.² Despite all the improvements and benefits which Romans brought to Britain, the position of women much worsen in comparison with Celtic society.

II.1.4. The Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings

There were raids from Germanic tribes after the breakdown of Roman law and civilization in 410 AD in Britain and after 430 AD these Angles and Saxons began to

¹ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-13]. Life in Roman Britain. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/romlife.html>.

² MASON, K. Moya. *Ancient Roman Women: A Look at Their Lives* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-13] Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.moyak.com/papers/roman-women.html>.

settle.¹ The Venerable Bede and his Ecclesiastical History of the English People is the major historical source for Britain from the late six to the early eight century.² Another important source is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle written by the king of Wessex, Alfred, who created a new legal system.³

Women in Anglo-Saxon England were nearly equal to men much more than in any other era before modern times. This status of equality was broken down by the Norman Conquest of 1066 because that military society considered women to be unimportant.⁴ What was a job description for a woman in Anglo-Saxon times? This would naturally depend on her social status and religion. Women had to spin and weave wool and made clothes for the family and other textiles such as bed-clothes, seat-covers and wall-hangings.⁵ Meal could be prepared and served by both women and men but serving of drinks have been traditionally a female work. They fed and milked the cow or sheep, made cheese and dairy. Women of this time could also become entertainers, comedians and singers or may be employed by households. Generally, women did not carry out hard physical work with the exception of peasants and slaves who had to do more demanding tasks.⁶

There were many laws related to marriage in Anglo-Saxon England. Firstly, woman was not forced to marry a man she disliked. Although, especially for nobility, marriage was often a political contract ensuring peace and financial benefits. A husband

¹ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. Earliest Times, s. 11.

² JAMES, Edward. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-15]. An Overview: Anglo – Saxons, 410 to 800. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/anglo_saxons/overview_anglo_saxons_01.shtml.

³ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. Earliest Times, s. 15.

⁴ *Wikipedia* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2011-03-15] Anglo – Saxon women. Dostupné z WWW: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_women#cite_ref-fell1987_0-3.

⁵ SHARMAN, Margaret. *Anglo-Saxons – Britain through the Ages*. London: Evan Brothers Limited, 1995, Everyday Life, s. 23.

⁶ *Wikipedia* [online]. [cit. 2010-11-18] Anglo – Saxon women. Dostupné z WWW: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_women#cite_ref-fell1987_0-3.

must pay money or land to the woman herself and she would have personal control over it. Therefore, a wife was not dependent on her husband. Laws dealt also with divorces which were rare but not a problem. If a woman wished to go away with her children, a man had to let her have a half of property. Secondly, Alfred's laws concerning sexual assaults went into great detail. Women were protected against both rape and seduction. Nevertheless, some men believed that women should be beaten regularly and, unfortunately, clergy encouraged them. In general, the way of treating women was above all the result of social class than the sex in Anglo-Saxon England.¹

Within Viking society the family was the most important unit above all. Prosperity of people's family was superior to personal well-being.² When they were moving from Scandinavia, Vikings took their families with them and women played a part in the process of settlement. This is confirmed by a note in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that Viking army was accompanied by women and children between the years 892 and 895. The great influence which women had within home is obvious when we consider the fact that many women were buried with the keys which symbolized their control over the household.³ Women were responsible for looking after farm animals, making cheese and butter, cooking, cleaning, washing, looking after children and also taking charge of the farm when her husband was out. A significant part of the day they spent by sewing, weaving and spinning wool. Stories, poetry and riddles were passed to children also by their mothers to ensure that the tradition will continue. Families usually chose husbands for the girls but they did not have to marry men if they

¹ *Wikipedia* [online]. [cit. 2010-11-18] Anglo – Saxon women. Dostupné z WWW: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_women#cite_ref-fell1987_0-3.

² GIBSON, Michael. *The Vikings*. Simon Schuster Young Books, 1993. Family life, s. 18.

³ JESCH, Judith. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-15]. Viking women. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/women_01.shtml#two.

did not like and could divorce their husbands. Viking women could be very independent but it again depended on the wealth of the family they came from.¹

II.2. THE MIDDLE AGES

The Middle Ages were a period of wars, changing climate and plagues, rebellion, disorder and renaissance.² There was a climatic change around 1300 which began with colder winters and wetter summers. These conditions led to Great European Famine of 1315 to 1322. Weakened population starved and this made people more susceptible to the Black Death. It was gradually rising again after 1485.³

The times were hard and so were conditions of women. Medieval society was completely dominated by men and the position of women changed dramatically. Women were inferior to men and had to without any objections obey their husbands. The hardest deal probably had poor peasant women because of the large scale of duties and never - ending work. They had to do all these things: make clothes, food, look after animals, children, grow vegetable, make dairy, do cleaning and washing. Responsibilities of noble women were different. In absence of her husband, a noble woman was responsible for the manor, lands and servants, villagers, harvest and animals and she even take part in defending castles or manors from invaders.

Marriage was the way to improve family's wealth or social position so the decision was made by families and women could not marry without their parents' consent. Noble women married earlier than poor women, because poor women had to work with her family as long as possible. Beating was nothing unusual when a husband

¹ GIBSON, Michael. *The Vikings*. Simon Schuster Young Books, 1993. The role of women, s. 42.

² MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. The Late Middle Ages, s. 43, 44.

³ JAMES, Tom. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-17]. The Middle Ages, 1154 - 1485. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/overview_middleages_01.shtml.

was dissatisfied with his wife or if she was disobedient. Producing children was another and the most important duty of a woman. (appendix nr. 2) She was expected to have many children because children's mortality was high and sons were preferable. Therefore they spent great time of their life pregnant and many women died in childbirth because medical care was very poor. Women were not allowed to own property unless they were widows. Then she could get a part of her husband's property and gain some independence until she remarried, which was possible.¹ The women in medieval world worked very hard because it was hard to live and survive in this period of wars, plagues, famine and male superiority. Women had few rights and they were treated that way.

II.3. THE TUDORS AND THE STUARS

During the 16th century the gap between poor and wealthy people grew even deeper.² Therefore, the difference between lives of poor and noble women was huge. Although there is an evidence that women in England had more freedom than women from the rest of the Europe³ and that they were self-confident and strong minded. The vast majority of women were meek and submissive to men. There were some women, mostly noble women, who gained respect and faith from their husbands such as Queen Katherine, whom Henry VIII. made a Governor of the Realm and Captain General of the home forces when he went to war in France or Catherine Parr whom he made regent

¹ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. The Late Middle Ages, s. 62, 63.

² BRISCOE, Alexandra. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [2011-03-13]. Poverty in Elizabethan England. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/poverty_01.shtml.

³ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. The Tudors, s. 84.

during his absence.¹ (appendix nr. 3) The fields in which women could or were allowed to work also varied according to social class. Of course, there were professions which were purely male in Tudor and Stuart times, such as doctors, lawyers and teachers. Wives and daughters, however, could be employed at their male relative's workshops and join some of the organizations of trades people and skilled workers. Women could also work as tailoresses, milliners, dyers, shoemakers, embroiderers, washerwomen, brewers, bakers, confectioners, midwives, apothecaries, sell foodstuff in the streets and spin cloth or work as a domestic servant.² Despite the fact that women after marriage, according to The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights, were not considered to be a whole valuable person³, they had to manage a lot of hard work. Most women were housewives kept busy from dawn to sunset by their roles of mothers and wives and their duties connected with it. Wives were supposed to help their husband run the farm or business and also look after it during his absence.⁴ As it was not safe to drink water a wife had to brew beer, bake bread for family members and make all essential preservation of food for the winter. It was not an exception if wife also had to made candles and soap or spun wool and linen for family. Farmers' wives were not spared from hard work on the fields, milking cows and growing herbs and vegetables. On top of that, women had to cook, wash clothes for all family, clean the house and if someone became ill, they were supposed to treat the illness as doctor was too expensive for

¹LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

² LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

³*17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18] Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights2.html>.

⁴ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

poorer people. Rich women had different kind of duties. They organized and supervised servants and ran the whole estate if their husbands were away.¹

In the 16th and 17th century everybody was supposed to know their place at home and in the society. So were women.² Already mentioned document, called The Law's Resolution of Women's rights, was to help women understand the law and their rights on financial aspects of marriage. The text was written by an unknown author who signed himself T. E. and was published in 1632.³ I am going to quote some lines from this document to gain clearer picture of what these laws were about and how reasonable and fair they were. The first extract is about when a man and a woman marry: "Now because Adam hath so pronounced that man and wife shall be but one flesh and by this a married woman perhaps may either doubt whether she be either none or no more than half a person."⁴ The other law deals with man's right to beat his wife: "If a man beat an out-law, a traitor, a pagan, his villain, or his wife, it is dispensable, because by the Law Common these persons can have no action."⁵ The next law is concerned with property in marriage. Simply, what husband had had before marriage is his own: "But the prerogative of the husband is best discerned in his dominion over all the external things in which the wife by combination divesteth herself of propriety in some sort and casteth it upon her husband, for her practice everywhere agrees with the theoric of law, and forcing necessity submits women to the affection thereof. Whatsoever the husband had

¹ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

²LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

³ *17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights2.html>.

⁴*17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights2.html>.

⁵ *17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights2.html>.

before coverture either in goods or lands, it is absolutely his own.”¹ And what woman had owned belong to her husband now: “For thus it is, if before marriage the woman were possessed of horses, neat, sheep, corn, wool, money, plate, and jewels, all manner of moveable substance is presently by conjunction the husband's, to sell, keep, or bequeath if he die. And though he bequeath them not, yet are they the husband's executor's and not the wife's which brought them to her husband.”² As we can see, married woman could not own any kind of property as everything possessed her husband.³ Marriage during the Tudor and Stuart times was still matter of arrangement.⁴ However, rich girls could marry when they were twelve years old as this was legal.⁵

As far as education is concerned, upper class women in 16th century should be educated in music, dancing, needlework but they also learned to read and write and some lucky girls learned languages such as Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian or French.⁶ Schools were only for boys and girls were taught at home. Nevertheless, academic subjects were considered less important towards the end of 16th century and women spent more time learning music and needlework. Daniel Defoe pointed out in his essay named *The Education of Women* how superficial education of women was: “Their youth is spent to teach them to stitch and sew or make baubles. They are taught to read, indeed, and perhaps to write their names, or so; and that is the height of a woman's

¹ *17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights2.html>.

² *17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights2.html>.

³ *17th century life and times* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Women's rights. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.17thcenturylifeandtimes.com/womens%20rights.html>.

⁴ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. The Tudors, The Stuarts, s. 84, 105.

⁵ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

⁶ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-18]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

education.”¹ He believed that God gave women an intellect for gaining knowledge and not for doing needlework. Daniel Defoe understood that the most remarkable difference between men and women is in their education. He wrote in his essay: “I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence; while I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves.”² However, those Defoe’s opinions were just progressive thoughts from the break of 17th century. In everyday hard reality of Tudor and Stuart England, poor children, who were the majority of English children, did not attend school because they were expected to start working and thus were helping the family since they were 7 years old.³

II.4. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial revolution meant not only a great change in the way women worked but also a big social change. Because of the rapid increase of towns and factories many people left countryside in order to work in the city⁴. Life had not changed for centuries before the Industrial revolution. Most families had to work hard to maintain living. Women had to support the family by hard physical work and at the same time to fulfill their roles as mothers. Children were not excluded from working.

¹ DEFOE, Daniel. *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* [online]. 1998 [cit. 2011-03-20]. (On) Education of Women, 1719. <http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=womenshistory&cdn=education&tm=17&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1719defoe-women.html>.

² DEFOE, Daniel. *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* [online]. 1998 [cit. 2011-03-20]. (On) Education of Women, 1719. <http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=womenshistory&cdn=education&tm=17&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1719defoe-women.html>.

³ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-20]. Tudor women. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/women.html>.

⁴ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 8

On contrary, they had to work by the age of six or seven.¹ Still, poor wives had to do all the household work such as cooking, cleaning, looking after children, fetching water, washing clothes and, of course, this work was not paid. Some families with better income could afford to employ a female servant to help with domestic tasks but there were not many families like that. Hard work of a servant - laundress could earn three times more money than work in agriculture but the working hours were double.² Women who did not work in the factories, could work at home and make boxes or envelopes, did ironing or needlework. These jobs were usually very low paid.³ However, they were suitable for married women because this kind of work was easier to combine with other duties in their own homes.⁴ Many women also worked in ironworks, as chain and nail makers, as brick workers, stone-breakers and in the mines - heavy, dirty and dangerous jobs.⁵ In the mines women and also children worked until 1842 when they were stopped from working underground by Mines Act⁶, but after that they continued doing above – ground mining tasks.⁷

The highest rise during the Industrial revolution was the rise of textile factories. Hand spinning had always been female occupation.⁸ Women were contributing to

¹ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. The eighteenth century, s. 120.

² BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

³ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Eve of the Industrial Revolution, s. 7.

⁴ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 10.

⁵ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Eve of the Industrial Revolution, s. 7.

⁶ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The ‚Problem‘ of Women Workers, s. 9.

⁷ BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

⁸ BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

family's income by producing lace, buttons, gloves, weaving wool and cotton cloth.¹ The introduction of new textile machine meant unemployment for many of them.² This was one of the reasons to move to the towns and look for the work in the factory. (appendix nr. 4) Huge number of women worked in textile industry. Actually, 57 percent of factory workers were female, majority of them under the age of twenty³ and by 1841 only 25 percent of them were married.⁴ However, highly paid and highly skilled tasks were left to men as well as supervising positions. Women were much less paid than men and therefore they were so highly employed in the textile industry.⁵

Middle class women often took an active part in running a family business.⁶ Guilds usually required carrying out an apprenticeship before a man gained the freedom of the trade. However, widow of a tradesman was considered to know the trade so well that she could continue husband's trade even without an apprenticeship. Widows often just continued to carry out the business as they did before their husbands' death. It was not unusual if a woman ran shops, taverns or worked as dressmakers and milliners.⁷ Similarly, farmer's wife was involved in the farm work, especially in producing dairy.⁸ Due to professionalization women had been excluded from the jobs they did previously.

¹ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the Family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 8.

² BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

³ BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

⁴ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 10.

⁵ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Eve of the Industrial Revolution, s. 7.

⁶ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 10.

⁷ BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

⁸ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 11.

One of these was, for example, working in the medical field. The Royal College of Physicians admitted only graduates of Oxford and Cambridge – school not available for women until 20th century.¹ On the other hand, teaching was very common for women as well as being governesses.² This period of Industrial revolution meant indeed a little change for upper class women.³

Within the marriage women were recognized as their husbands' property by the law. A wife was not protected against violence from her husband, could not divorce, she had no rights to maintenance if the man left her and, above all, in such a case she even may be prevented from visiting her children.⁴ Childbearing was still dangerous because of the infection and although maternal deaths were fewer in rich families, the number of deaths during childbearing was still high.⁵ Poor mothers needed to work so they took their children with them to shops if possible. Others left their children to older siblings, relatives, neighbours or some dame or infant schools which are comparable to today's nurseries. Sometimes women gave their babies opiate so called "Godfrey's Cordial" to keep children sleeping while the mother was working.⁶

¹BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

²BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

³HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 11.

⁴HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 11.

⁵HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Industrial Age Begins, s. 11.

⁶BURNETTE, Joyce. *EH.net Encyklopedia* [online]. 2010 [2011-03-25]. Women Workers in the British Industrial Revolution. Dostupné z WWW: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/burnette.women.workers.britain>.

II.5. VICTORIAN BRITAIN

During the Victorian era family was the most important for the society in Britain.¹ This fact was also caused by the example of Queen Victoria who became a model of respectable married women with a large family.² She gained even more popularity by publication of her own diary about her life with Prince Albert. Never before had ordinary people have such an opportunity to know something so private about the royal family.³ This period was also important for women in the way the law changed. These changes were mainly concerning laws about marriage, legal status of women and their children.⁴

Once married, a woman was expected to become a perfect wife, mother and in all ways an ideal woman. Her whole life should be occupied by motherhood and household. She had to respect and obey her husband, stay out of public sphere, accept her submission to men, be patient and diligent. However, life was not the same for upper and middle class women and for working class women. In no way the life of poor woman could be the same as for the richer.⁵ A majority of female population, about 80 percent, were working class women by that time in Britain. At least one servant was necessary to be considered a middle class family.⁶ The life of a working class woman was so hard that she could not afford to focus only on her children and

¹ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Home and Hearth, s. 13.

² ABRAMS, Lynn. *BBC History* [online]. 2001 [cit. 2011-03-25]. Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_09.shtml.

³ MCDOWALL, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. 5th edition. Harlow : Longman, 1989. The nineteenth century, s. 144.

⁴ Wikipedia [online]. 2011 [2011-03-25]. Women in the Victorian Era. Dostupné z WWW: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era.

⁵ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Home and Hearth, s. 14.

⁶ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [2011-03-25]. Women in the 19th century. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/vicwomen.html>.

home without bringing some income into family's budget by working.¹ Middle class families were very proud of their homes and did everything to keep their living on high standards. On contrary, poor families had a little living space and lived in filthy conditions. This difference is also visible in the life expectancy. While poor working class labourers died in average age of fifteen, middle class man's average age was forty-five.² Homeless families were sent into workhouse where family members were separated from each other and were allowed to meet only for one hour a week. So where were these family values of Victorian society?³

It was common in Victorian times for people to marry and to found, if possible a large, family. (appendix nr. 5) Poor people married younger, often in their teens. Rich and middle class men married later, in their twenties or thirties, when they already had a comfortable home with servants for their wives and children. Divorce was rare in 19th century.⁴ However, in 1857, divorce laws were changed by the Matrimonial Cause Bill which allowed man to divorce his wife in the case that she was unfaithful to him and also a woman could divorce her husband too because of his adultery but she had to show additional misconduct by her husband.⁵ Victorian wives and children were expected to obey. Men ruled and have power over their families. Until 1879 a man could still beat his wife and before 1882 a married woman did not have legally any money or property – everything belonged to her husband.⁶ This was changed by the Married Women's Property Act in 1882 which made it possible for women to own and

¹ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Home and Hearth, s. 14.

² WOOD, Richard. *Family Life in Victorian Britain*. Hove: Wayland, 1994. Home Sweet Home, s. 6.

³ WOOD, Richard. *Family Life in Victorian Britain*. Hove: Wayland, 1994. Home Sweet Home, s. 6 – 9.

⁴ WOOD, Richard. *Family Life in Victorian Britain*. Hove: Wayland, 1994. Parents and Children, s. 10.

⁵ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Victorian Families, s. 17.

⁶ WOOD, Richard. *Family Life in Victorian Britain*. Hove: Wayland, 1994. Parents and Children, s. 12.

manage their property and income even after marriage.¹ By another act in 1884 a wife could file for divorce on the basis of her husband's adultery immediately and not to wait two years, as previously required.² Great changes were made also about guardianship. Before these laws father could let the guardianship of his children in the case of his death to a stranger rather than to their own mother and it was not possible for her to change it.³ The Infant and Child Custody Act in 1839 allowed divorce women to apply for custody of her children under the age of seven but only if adultery was not proved to her.⁴ The Guardianship of Infants Act in 1886 meant that mothers become automatically the guardians of their children after their husbands' deaths.⁵ Progress was also made in education. Elementary schooling became compulsory in 1880. This was beneficial for mothers who did not need to supervise their small children while at work despite the fact that not all children were sent to school⁶ because this law also meant that parents would lose the money working children had brought to family budget.⁷

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were half a million more women than men in Britain. Obviously, not all women could marry and, therefore, they had to find the way to support themselves. A middle or upper class woman had to find a job corresponding with her social status, yet remain 'a lady'. The most common occupation for these women was a governess or a teacher in another rich house.⁸ Nevertheless, their

¹ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Victorian Families, s. 17.

² WOJTZAK, Helena. *English Social History: Women of Hastings and Leonards*. 2009 [cit. 2011-03-26]. Women's status in mid-19th century England. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.hastingspress.co.uk/history/19/overview.htm>.

³ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Victorian Families, s. 17, 18.

⁴ WOJTZAK, Helena. *English Social History: Women of Hastings and Leonards*. 2009 [cit. 2011-03-26]. Women's status in mid-19th century England. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.hastingspress.co.uk/history/19/overview.htm>.

⁵ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Victorian Families, s. 17.

⁶ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Victorian Families, s. 18.

⁷ HONEY, Alison. *Investigating the Victorians*. London: National Trust, 1993. A change for the worse, s. 30.

⁸ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Early Careers for Middle-Class Women, s. 11.

teaching was not very good as they themselves had no appropriate education and knew a little. The situation got better when the Queen's College and Bedford College were found in 1848 and 1849. These schools were intended for young women who wanted to become governesses. Mathematics and some other advanced lectures were included in their education which had been unavailable to women before. An opportunity to become a doctor for women did not come until 1877 after Sophia Jex-Blake fought for ten years to be allowed to attend the Medical School of Edinburgh University. Only two women were recognized doctors before this time in Britain – both registered as doctors abroad. Nursing was quite a desirable and respectable profession for middle class women who needed to earn their own living.¹ There were attempts to improve and extend female employment and careers for middle class women. From 1850s onwards several organizations were rising in this field and one of these was the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, founded in 1859.² Inventions such as typewriter in 1874 and telephone in 1876 also widened women's job opportunities.³ Industrial expansion meant a need for clerical and administrative workers and this kind of work was thought to be very suitable for women because they are careful and patient.

Working class women were also trying to get better working conditions and adequate wage by joining trade unions, political organizations and movements. New organizations supporting working women arose and one of the greater importance was the Women's Protective and Provident League (WTUL) supporting women from all kind of occupation to found trade unions and encouraging women to join. The WTUL was against an inequity in the sense that "where women do the same work as

¹ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Early Careers for Middle-Class Women, s. 11.

² OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Early Careers for Middle-Class Women, s. 11.

³ LAMBERT, Tim. *A World History Encyclopedia* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-26]. Women in the 19th century. Dostupné z WWW: <http://www.localhistories.org/vicwomen.html>.

men, they shall receive equal pay”.¹ They were emphasizing not only the low pay but also health dangers of their work in comparison with high profits of the companies. The National Federation of Women Workers was founded by Mary Macarthur in 1906 who published the working conditions and wages of working class women so that general public learnt about it. There were many sudden strikes but they quickly ended. Being a servant also was not very pleasurable job but mainly feminine. A servant had to get up early between 5am and 6am and got to bed by 10pm or 11pm. The whole servant’s day was filled with heavy, demanding and nasty tasks. Moreover, servants had no legal protection and not many employers support them during the illness, for example. A Servant’s Union was founded in 1890 but it did not last for long. Nevertheless, women by this time had shown that they could and will participate in labour movement despite the fact that they were not still allowed to join many significant male trade unions.²

II.6. WORLD WARS

II.6.1. The First World War

The First World War meant for women an experience of greater freedom and also better wages than ever before. Because of millions of men sent into the war there was a need to substitute for them. Women began to work in new types of jobs that had been previously done by men.³ Some people did not like the idea of women working in ‘men’s’ jobs so new names were given to some of them that they seemed more feminine. For example, ‘petrol nymphs’ were garage attendants and ‘street housemaids’

¹ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women and the Labour Movement, s. 16, 17.

² OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women and the Labour Movement, s. 17 – 20.

³ MARTIN, Sara. *First World War.com*. [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women in WWI. – Women in the Workforce: Temporary Men. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/womenww1_four.htm.

were road sweepers. 'Munitionettes' were women working in munitions and engineering factories. (appendix nr. 6) Firstly, there was a disapproval of women working with weapons but as the war progressed it became clear that without women helping in this kind of factories soldiers will not have enough weapons.¹ 80 percent of weapons used by British army were produced by munitionettes. Their health was everyday exposure to dangerous and poisonous substances. Women were paid much less for the wartime work than men. Moreover, employers often divided work tasks into smaller parts so that more women could be employed for lower wages.² Despite the fact that women were paid less than men even for the same work during the First World War, they still got much higher salaries than they would gain before the war.³ Not only in industry and engineering were women needed. They were an essential support for working on the land, on transport and in hospitals.⁴ Some women for the first time came into contact with the public by working in banks and post offices.⁵ Type of work done by individual women depended on the location and their social status.⁶ Nevertheless, some male-dominated occupations, especially dentist, hairdresser or architect were not available to women.⁷

All the mentioned jobs were connected with the 'home front' but some women were near the front lines as members of the Women's Auxiliary sections of the army,

¹ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women and War Work, s. 22.

² WILDE, Robert. *About.com.European History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and Work in World War 1. Dostupné také z WWW: <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/womeninworldwar1/a/womenworkww1.htm>.

³ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Motherhood and War, s. 24.

⁴ WILDE, Robert. *About.com.European History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and Work in World War 1. Dostupné také z WWW: <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/womeninworldwar1/a/womenworkww1.htm>.

⁵ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women and War Work , s. 22.

⁶ WILDE, Robert. *About.com.European History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and Work in World War 1. Dostupné také z WWW: <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/womeninworldwar1/a/womenworkww1.htm>.

⁷ *National Archives*. [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and the First World War. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/document_packs/women.htm.

navy and the air force or as unpaid nurses of the Volunteer Aid Detachment. However, nurses had to become a paid profession as nurses were desperately needed during the war. Female doctors were treated as unequal to male doctors and earned even less money than they would get in their civilian life.¹

Perhaps the most important milestone for women of the war was the Representation of the People Act which gave women over thirty the right to vote in local elections and Parliamentary Qualification of Women Act which allowed women to be elected as Members of Parliament. Significant achievements on this field had been done before the First World War in 1869 when women ratepayers got the vote in local elections and when 1907 they gained the right to be elected as local councilors.² However, women had to fight for the right to vote. These women were called 'suffragists'. Their program included meetings and rallies. They tried to influence government and published their own newspapers. The more militant members of the Women's Social and Political Union organized more dramatic and violent protests. Suffragists encouraged women during the war to join the war work and in 1918 and their efforts to help during the war were appreciated by the right to vote.³ It was also necessary to change the law because only men who lived in England for the twelve months before elections could vote. This eliminated a great number of voters – soldiers. This was another reason why the law had to be changed.⁴

¹ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women and War Work, s. 24, 25.

² MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Milestones for Women, s. 3.

³ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Only Simple Justice, s. 2,3.

⁴ *National Archives*. [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and the First World War. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/document_packs/women.htm.

Without doubts, women during the First World War proved that they are capable of doing a wide variety of jobs than they were allowed before the war. However, when the war ended women were forced to return to their pre-wartime jobs or domestic life.¹

II.6.2. Between the Wars

After the First World War women gained the right to vote and this was often presented by government as the reward for their wartime work.² Anyway, it was not earlier than ten years later when all women over twenty-one gained the right to vote.³ In 1919 another law was passed. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act ensured women that they could work as lawyers, in government jobs even if they were married. However, a new international agreement called The Washington Convention restricted women from working in the night in industry. This meant that better paid jobs such as printing trade, were now closed to women. Interestingly, nursing was not involved in the restriction despite the fact that nurses also had to work in the night but there was no competition with men in that kind of work.⁴

During the Depression in 1920s and beginning of 1930s there was an increase in unemployment in Britain. The most affected were heavy industries where mainly men worked but traditionally female textile industry was not spared.⁵ Many women had to return into ridiculously paid domestic service or a job in laundry and if they refused they would not get an unemployment pay.⁶ New job opportunities arose in the inter-war time and these were, for example, waitresses, cinema usherettes or other jobs connected

¹ WILDE, Robert. *About.com Guide* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and Work in World War 1. Dostupné z WWW: <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/womeninworldwar1/a/womenworkww1.htm>.

² OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Between the Wars, s. 26.

³ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Milestones for Women, s. 3.

⁴ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Between the Wars, s. 26.

⁵ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Between the Wars, s. 26.

⁶ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Nation's Health, s. 27.

with leisure industries.¹ In 1920s young people enjoyed more going out into teashops, cocktail bars, cinema and for dancing and women liked to dress as movie stars.²

There were also important law changes concerning divorce and marriage. The Matrimonial Causes Act allowed women to sue for divorce on the same conditions as men, in 1923. For the first time in 1937 women were given an equal guardianship over their children by a new Guardianship of Infants Act. The Maternity and Child Welfare Act focused on well – being of mother and their babies. This Act allowed local authorities to found ante-natal and child welfare clinics. Despite this, a few women still could afford adequate medical care and they were often overworked and suffered from illnesses between the wars in Britain.³

II.6.3. The Second World War

As in the First World War women were an important part of British workforce in the Second World War and similarly when the World War Two ended, women were no longer needed and advised to return home. In spring 1941 it became compulsory for every woman, both married and single, aged eighteen to sixty to work for the country in the armed forces or industry. By mid-1943, 90 percent of single and 80 percent of married women were employed.⁴ Because many married women, often with children, were needed for supporting their country during the war by working, the government had to found new institutions for child care. By 1943 the number of state-run nurseries increased from 14 in 1940 to 1 345. However, when the war ended and women had to give up their war-time jobs and return home, the nurseries closed.

¹ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Between the Wars, s. 28.

² THOMAS WESTON, Pauline. *Fashion-Era.com* [online]. Year unknown [cit. 2011-03-28]. Life between the Wars 1920 – 1940 Social History. Dostupné také z WWW: http://www.fashion-era.com/1920s_life_between_the_wars.htm#Jazz.

³ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The Nation's Health, s. 28, 29.

⁴ HARRIS, Carrol. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women Under Fire in World War Two. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/women_at_war_01.shtml.

During the Second World War women took over men's jobs in engineering, chemicals, transport, munitions, commercial sectors and other women joined to armed forces.¹ And once again, their wages were much better than they were before the war but at the same time they were still paid less than men for the same work.² The Women's Land Army was reestablished in 1939 and its members did hard, dirty, low-paid but valuable work not only for British soldiers but for the whole nation. Women working in factories produced a variety of army equipment such as ammunition, uniforms and even aero planes.³ Some women acted as spies because of their unquestionable ability to use the sexuality in order to gain information and secrets and thanks to the ideal of women's purity and morality.⁴ Many women chose to work in one of the armed forces and these were the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service), the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Forces) and the WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service). (appendix nr. 7) Women were not involved in active fighting; however, they were trained to do everything else which could help male soldiers.⁵

In 1945 the Control of Employment Act came into existence and it guaranteed demobilized men preferential right to get a job rather than women. Although women during the war again proved that they are able to cope with the work which no one believed they would ever be able to, there were no 'rewards' for women's contribution

¹ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Warfare and Welfare, s. 32, 33.

² OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women in the Second World War, s. 30.

³ History Learning Site [online]. 2010 – 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. The Role of Women 1940 – 1945. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/women_WW2.htm.

⁴ LEWIS JOHNSON, Jone. About.com Guide [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-28]. Women and World war II. -. Oponents. Dostupné z WWW: <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/warwwii/a/opponents.htm>.

⁵ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women in the Second World War, s. 30.

to the war effort. Women got from the Second World War just their experience and new knowledge.¹

II.7. AFTER THE WORLD WARS

Great changes had been done in the second half of the 20th century in the fields covering women's family lives and also working terms. Society's changing views were evident and the Family Planning Act was in 1967 was a proof of it. This Act allowed unmarried people to use contraception.² The contraceptive pill was available to public since 1965 and it meant an opportunity to reduce a size of the families.³ Another important step in the year 1967 was the Abortion Law that allowed abortion on condition that two doctors gave their references. Between 1958 and 1972 there were 2.4 children in every family in Britain but after 1971 the birth rate decreased. More babies were and still are born as illegitimate and this is also an evidence of changing attitudes.⁴ In 1969 a divorce was easier matter thanks to the Divorce Reform Act and in 1970 the Matrimonial Proceeding and Property Act bettered also material settlement between married couples. Divorce figure has risen but it rather means that women are now able to escape from unhappy marriage than those families are less happy.⁵

Other laws such as the Equal Pay Act in 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 and the right to maternity leave ensured women improvements at work. The Equal

¹ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Women in the Second World War, s. 30.

² HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Families and Jobs – Double Burden, s. 36.

³ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Milestones for Women, s. 3.

⁴ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Families and Jobs – Double Burden, s. 36.

⁵ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Families and Jobs – Double Burden, s. 38, 39.

Pay Act should forced employers to pay men and women equally for the same job.¹ However, some jobs were entire female – dominated so the law could not be applied to them. Moreover, many women realized that new names were given to their work so that they seemed a little different from men's jobs in order to avoid the law.² The Employment Protection Act of 1976 gave mothers, who worked with the same employer at least two years full – time or five years part – time, the right to maternity leave and also they could return to work after having a child.³ The Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 outlawed any kind of discrimination of women in every possible field – in employment and training, the provision of housing, facilities, services, advertising and this also included an indirect discrimination. Employer now had to hire people on the basis of their education and skills than person's sex or marital status. Now women could choose what they wanted to study or qualified for or to choose a job they wished. And to make sure that these laws will be effective the government set up the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1975 to check it.⁴ The law had not worked perfectly, many people were not able to get used to these changes and would prefer women staying at home with children. However, it was a great step forward.⁵

Living conditions also greatly improved after the Second World War. In 1989, 60 percent of families owed their own home and 97 percent had owned a bathroom and an inside toilet. New inventions such as washing machines, fridges and vacuum cleaners very much easier women's work and made possible for them to combine their jobs with responsibilities at home. By that time almost every household in Britain had those

¹ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Rights nad Duties, s. 6.

² OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Equal at Last?, s. 10.

³ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Equal at Last?, s. 10, 11.

⁴ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Rights nad Duties, s. 6, 7.

⁵ MURRAY, Jenni. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-29]. Women Under Fire in World War Two. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/jmurray_01.shtml.

innovations as well as television and telephone.¹ Today it is the matter-of-course to have these improvements and it is hard to imagine dealing without them. Despite the fact that women now enjoy equality between men and women, majority of domestic tasks is still done mainly by women, however, housework is far from hard and gruelling work of past.²

Women towards the end of the 20th century began to take themselves more seriously in the way of developing their careers and intervening into politics such as Margaret Thatcher who won in 1979 the election and became the first female Prime Minister.³ What made it difficult for women in 1980s to have a full-time job was the fact that there were a few child – care institutions in Britain and mothers had to find an alternative way of a day – care for their children. Not all women gained the equal salary and this was also often caused by the character of women’s work. There were few women working in technology, science or computing at the end of 1990s in Britain. On contrary, a great number of women stuck in lower paid ‘female’ jobs such as teaching, nursering, caring for children and old people, clerical and office work.⁴ This situation is gradually improving. However, women had to invest more effort to promote to a higher position in work and to get the same approval as men.⁵

Today women in the United Kingdom have the same legal rights as men. They could vote on the same basis, stand for the election, be appointed to public office, own property and enter into contrasts independently on their marital status, can sue and be sued. Laws about childcare and responsibilities and rights after divorce are also the

¹ HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Looking Forward to Equality at Home, s. 41 – 44.

² HYNDLEY, Kate. *Women and the family*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Looking Forward to Equality at Home, s. 44.

³ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. Equal at Last?, s. 39.

⁴ OWEN, Patricia. *Women and Work*. Hove: Wayland, 1989. The 1980s Onwards, s. 44, 45.

⁵ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Literature* [online]. 2006 [cit. 2011-03-29]. Women in the Twentieth Century and Beyond. Dostupné z WWW: http://www2.ivcc.edu/gen2002/Twentieth_Century.htm.

same for both sexes. Equality is assured also in criminal laws. Penalties and protections are not different for men and women.¹ Women in 21st century can wear whatever they want to, can have short hair, drink alcohol and wear make-up. They can choose whether they want to have a large family or focus on their careers, choose whatever they want to study ranging from teachers to engineers and apply for any kind of job they like. Although, men are sometimes still paid more than women and most women have a greater deal of responsibility for children and household,² women passed already a long way and reached many achievements to improve their position in society and their way is still not at the end.³

¹ MEADE-KING, Maggy. *Women in Britain*. London: FCO - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1993. Rights nad Duties, s. 6.

² MURRAY, Jenni. *BBC History* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2011-03-29]. Women Under Fire in World War Two. Dostupné z WWW: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/jmurray_01.shtml.

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III. CONCLUSION

Through my bachelor thesis I have learnt that women had a dominant leading position in the earliest times of the Stone Age what have never happened again in history. I have found out that the change in society was caused by the change of nature which led to an agricultural way of life demanding particularly physical male strength.

Women's lives have always been centred on the family and men were breadwinners. This division naturally resulted from the fact that it was more suitable for women to care for children and run the household than to do the hard physical men's work. Women could not occupy themselves with trade, business, politics and many other fields of work because looking after children and keeping the house without running water, gas, electricity and also the wide range of time – saving machines they had no much time left to do something else. This social structure remained more or less the same so long over time that it was fixed deeply in people's minds. Therefore, it was so difficult for women to change this attitude.

In my point of view, this division of duties and tasks was not so unfair and unconsidered. On the other hand, what I do find inequitable and unjust were a few rights protecting women from violence and total dependence on men. Some earlier societies such as the Celts, the Anglo – Saxon and the Vikings treated their women in a better way and they gained adequate recognition by men. However, since the Conquest of Britain women often had no rights at all, especially within marriage. They could not own property, had any control over their children and were completely inferior to men.

Women deserved a better way of behaving towards them but when the first changes occurred it was no sooner than in the Industrial revolution when the range of jobs available to women extended. In the World Wars women had realized that they are capable to successfully perform men's jobs and, therefore, required the same conditions,

treatment and the rights as men had. Their fight was long and hard but eventually they succeeded. It was also thanks to the inventions of 19th and mainly 20th century and the reduction in number of children women gave birth to, also that women had more time to have a job and at the same time meet the needs of the family.

During my survey I have also learnt how big the difference was between lives of rich and poor women and how few was the rich ones and how many – the vast majority were poor. Today, women are equal to men, have the same rights and opportunities. Despite the fact that most women still undertake most of the domestic responsibilities and that all jobs are still in some ways divided into ‘men’s’ and ‘women’s’ work, the quality of lives of women improved radically.

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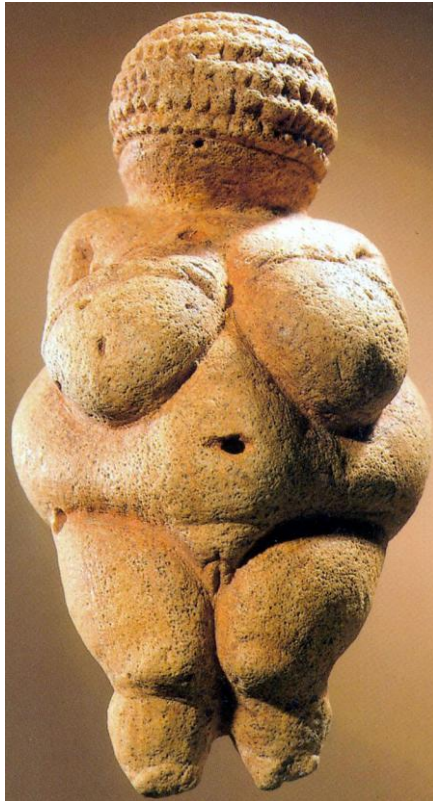
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APPENDICES



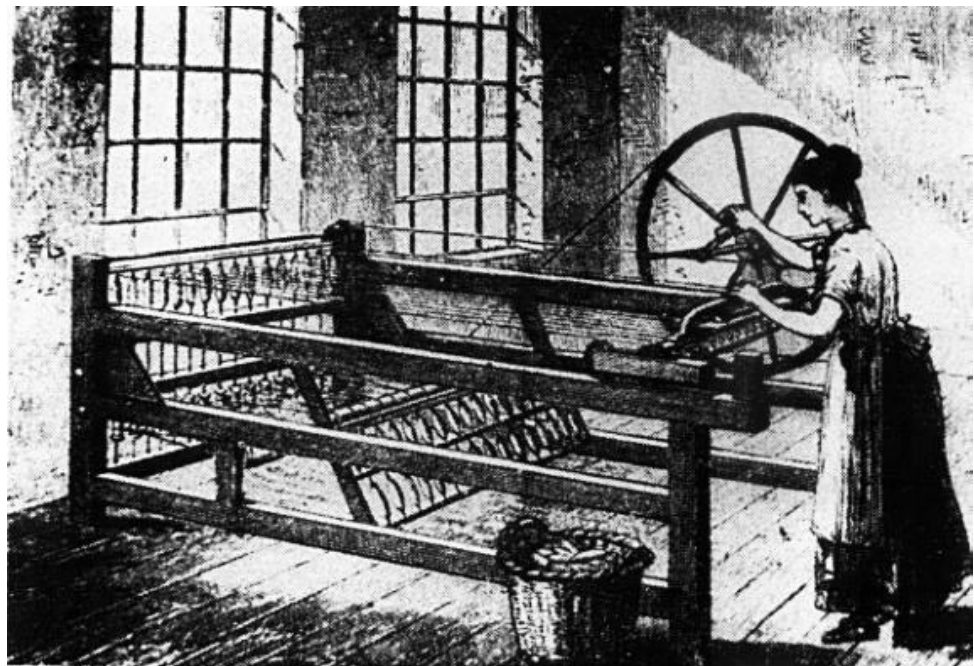
Appendix 1: the Venus of Willendorf



Appendix 2: Childbirth in Middle Ages



Appendix 3: Catherine Paar



Appendix 4: Women in the Industrial revolution



Appendix 5: Victorian family



Appendix 6: Women working in a munitions factory in England during the WW1



Appendix 7: Women's Royal Naval Service

RESUMÉ

Díky své bakalářské práci jsem zjistila, že žena měla vedoucí, dokonce nadřazené místo nad muži pouze v nejstarších obdobích doby kamenné, kdy byla uctívána jako matka – bohyně plodnosti a že již nikdy více v historii tohoto postavení ženy nedosáhly.

Život ženy se vždy zaměřoval převážně na rodinu a muži plnili úlohu živitelů rodiny. Toto společenské rozdělení zůstalo víceméně nezměněno po tak dlouhou dobu, že bylo těžké změnit tyto zakořeněné názory.

Z mého úhly pohledu nebylo toto rozdělení povinností až tak nespravedlivé a nepromyšlené. Ženy jsou fyzicky slabší a tak práce v domácnosti a péče o děti se pro ně více hodily. Na druhou stranu nedostatek práv pro ochranu žen jsem shledala nespravedlivým. Od dobytí Británie Vilémem Dobyvatelem neměly ženy téměř žádná práva. Jejich postavení se ještě zhoršilo po svatbě. Nesměly vlastnit žádný majetek a byly zcela podřízené mužům.

První změny nastaly až v průmyslové revoluci, kdy se rozšířily pracovní možnosti pro ženy. Během světových válek si ženy uvědomily, že jsou bez problémů schopny vykonávat práci mužů, a proto požadovaly, aby s nimi bylo i tak zacházeno co se týká platu i pracovních podmínek. Ženy musely bojovat dlouho a tvrdě, aby toho dosáhly. Vynálezy 19. a 20. století tomu také napomohly.

Během svého průzkumu jsem se také dozvěděla, jak velký rozdíl byl mezi pracující a vyšší třídou a jak málo bylo bohatých žen ve srovnání s obrovským množstvím chudých. Dnes jsou ženy rovné mužům, mají stejná práva i možnosti. A přestože většina žen se stále stará o celou domácnost a děti a zaměstnání jsou stále rozdělená na ‚mužskou‘ a ‚ženskou‘ práci, přesto se ale kvalita života žen radikálně zlepšila.

ANOTACE

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Jméno a příjmení: | Jarmila Halamová |
| Katedra: | Anglického jazyka |
| Vedoucí práce: | PhDr. Světlana Obenausová, Ph.D. |
| Rok obhajoby: | 2011 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Název práce: | Lives of women in Britain throughout centuries |
| Název v angličtině: | Lives of women in Britain throughout centuries |
| Anotace práce: | Moje bakalářská práce se zabývá průzkumem měnícího se postavení žen v Britské společnosti. Zahrnuje všechna historická období od pravěku po současnost. V každém jednotlivém období jsem zkoumala rodinný život a pracovní možnosti a povinnosti žen. Také zmiňuji vzdělávání a rozdíly mezi vyšší vrstvou, střední třídou a pracující třídou žen. |
| Klíčová slova: | Postavení ženy ve starověku, ženy ve středověku, život žen za vlády Tudorovců a Stuartovců, průmyslová revoluce a ženy, Viktoriánská éra, Světové války, Období po světových válkách |
| Anotace v angličtině: | My bachelor thesis is concerned with a survey about changing position of women in British society. It covers all historical periods from prehistoric times until today. In every individual period I investigated the family life and working opportunities and duties of women. I also mentioned their education and differences among upper - class, middle - class and working - class women. |
| Klíčová slova v angličtině: | Position of women in ancient history, women in the Middle Ages, life of women during the reign of Tudors and Stuarts, Industrial revolution and women, Victorian era, World Wars, The period after the World Wars |
| Přílohy vázané v práci: | Appendix 1 – Fotografie Venuše z Willendorfu Appendix 2 – Rytina porodu ve středověku Appendix 3 – Obraz Kateřiny Paarové Appendix 4 – Rytina ženy v průmyslové revoluci Appendix 6 – Fotografie žen pracujících v továrnách na zbraně za 1.světové války Appendix 7 – Fotografie žen z Britského námořnictva za 2.světové války |
| Rozsah práce: | 51 stran |
| Jazyk práce: | Anglický |