

### **Womanliness in the Slums: A Free Kindergarten in early-twentieth-century Edinburgh**

The photographs [Figures One and Two] were taken in September 1907. In the first, a dozen children sit around a table in a panelled room. Each wears a smock, with contrasting cuff and collar; a birdcage hangs from the ceiling, some modelling clay and sheets of paper rest on the tabletop. In the second, the children are outside. Some are in their own world, focused on their gardening. Most cluster around the two adults in the picture; the man is digging, perhaps at the direction of the woman to his right.

We are in early twentieth-century Edinburgh, in the Canongate, in (and behind) a building at the end of one of the narrow closes that are so typical of urban development in the city's Old Town. Located either side of the steep road that leads up to the Castle and down to Holyrood, the area was then characterized by a densely-packed admixture of city-centre industry – the Edinburgh and Leith Gas Company, breweries, the Holyrood Flint Glassworks – and once fine stone-built mansions and tenements that had been converted to slum dwellings as waves of migrants moved into the area during the first decades of the previous century, many from the Highlands or Ireland.

The photographs show a perhaps unexpected incursion into such an environment, one which addressed the youngest inhabitants of this slum district. This was St Saviour's Child Garden, which opened on All Saints Day 1906, and occupied a room in the mission hall of the Episcopal church of Old St Paul's (under whose auspices it was founded) at Brown's Close. Three children attended on that first day; a year or so later the roll numbered about 12. By the time this photograph was taken [Figure Three] pupils numbered in the 40s, and new premises

had been taken across the Canongate in Chessel's Court. There it would remain until its closure in 1977.

St Saviour's was one of the first Free Kindergartens to be opened in the British Isles, part of a movement that constituted an important addition to the nation's philanthropic, urban and educational landscape as the twentieth century began. Typically sited in the heart of slum areas, and funded by donations so that they were free (or charged a minimal daily fee), they were conceived and promoted as a new and effective way to tackle the problem of the urban poor. Through these 'tiny enclaves of social action,' as they were later described, their advocates believed that society might be rebuilt from its youngest citizens upwards.<sup>1</sup>

The Free Kindergarten had its origins in the re-working of Friedrich Froebel's child-centred pedagogical theories in mid-to-late nineteenth century Berlin. Formulated as an antidote to academic and overly-strict systems of early-years education, Froebel had intended his method to be applied in a rural or village context, and delivered primarily by mothers to their own children. It was the innovation of the educational campaigner Baroness Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülöw, as Ann Taylor Allen observes, 'to adapt the system ... to the new urban and industrial society' and, in so doing, create a new area of professional expertise.<sup>2</sup> Von Marenholtz-Bülöw argued that working-class mothers were too harassed, uneducated and ill-housed to be capable of full motherhood themselves and therefore advocated the creation of *Volkskindergärten*, staffed by upper and middle-class women, noting that 'until the mothers of the lower class are a better educated race, the education of their children must be the care of the educated classes.'<sup>3</sup> In this respect, rather than being a technique 'for the intellectual and spiritual education of all children,' kindergarten became, as Barbara Beatty notes, 'a form of

benevolent social control.<sup>4</sup> Thus core Froebelian techniques such as the system of Gifts and Occupations (ritualized methods of play such as paper folding and building blocks according to specific patterns, which were intended to invoke in the child an understanding of God's ordering of life and nature, and which required manipulative skills and hand-eye coordination), were simplified and re-cast as developing the manual skills useful for a working population. This re-working also reflected the influence of the ideas of the purpose of education of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, another key theorist for those whom the kindergarten historian Kevin Brehony has called Revisionist Froebelians.<sup>5</sup>

To promote her ideas, von Marenholtz-Bülow founded the Society for Family and Popular Education (with a training school and attached kindergarten) in Berlin in 1860. Her follower, Henriette Schrader-Breymann, re-named it Pestalozzi-Froebel House in 1881, and developed the prototype of the Free Kindergarten. This was to take the form of a surrogate home, to which the child was daily removed to the care of a surrogate mother, the *Kindergartnerin* (kindergartner). In this quasi-domestic environment, surrounded by nature in the form of a garden and with pets to care for, through domestic chores and guided play with the modified Gifts and Occupations, the working-class child could, effectively, be trained in how to be a 'proper' child.

Schrader-Breymann maintained von Marenholtz-Bülow's insistence that it was middle- and upper-class women who should be kindergartners, and her students, like the children, also learnt through doing by working in the kindergarten as well as taking lessons in nursing, the domestic arts and infant care. She envisaged that her students could establish kindergartens in slum and working-class areas of cities; living in the same district and, by

forging relationships with both children and their parents, becoming part of the community themselves. In this way, as Allen remarks, the broadest aim of Pestalozzi-Froebel House could be achieved: ‘to forge a natural rapport between rich and poor, between the educated and uneducated classes,’<sup>6</sup> and thereby relieve class conflict and bring all of society together in the project of modernity.

The pedagogical origins of Free Kindergarten have meant that it has been studied primarily by historians of education. They have sought to place it within the broader history of the application and the promotion of Froebel’s ideas across Europe and North America from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and the ongoing campaign to create meaningful early childhood education. In the British instance, the literature charts the initial importation of Froebel’s ideas, their institutionalization through the establishment of The Froebel Society in 1875 and a training system for kindergarten teachers.<sup>7</sup> More recent studies, especially those of Brehony, have focused on the evolution of Froebelian theory from the 1880s, the challenging of a strict adherence to the Gifts and Occupations, and the identification of key protagonists and the kindergartens they founded, initially for middle- and upper-class children, and subsequently for working-class children in Birmingham, London and Edinburgh.<sup>8</sup> Yet, as Brehony notes, ‘comparatively little’ has been written in detail about the Free Kindergarten movement in England (or rather, the United Kingdom).<sup>9</sup> There is nothing akin to Marta Gutman’s 2014 book on the Free Kindergarten movement in California, an exemplary study that combines biography, social, architectural and institutional histories to create an invaluable account of a very particular charitable landscape and the women who made it.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond this, the literature on Free Kindergartens is oddly patchy, especially if we consider that their founders, as Beatty and Allen have shown, conceptualized them as a tool of social reform, the overwhelmingly female workforce who created and ran them, the audience at which they were targeted, and their location in slum areas. Kindergarteners were clearly participants in a movement through which the concept of the ‘sacralized child’, in Viviane Zelizer’s term, was expanded to the working classes: the idea that ‘properly loved children, regardless of social class, belonged in a domesticated, non-productive world of lessons, games and token money.’<sup>11</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, as Hugh Cunningham argues, this was increasingly accompanied by the belief that children (especially urban children) were the future of the race, and that the state could not be careless about their prospects.<sup>12</sup> Equally, there is a correlation between Froebel’s idea of a child-centred learning (and its Berlin refinements), one in which each infant was enabled to reveal their inner divine nature and thus achieve their purpose as a rational being, with the ideals of the later-nineteenth century settlement movement and its concern to create environments in which the urban poor could achieve citizenship and participate fully in modern life; such environments serving as a substitute or model for an increasingly concerned state.

Despite these connections, and the centrality of women to philanthropic praxis that has been at the core of histories of voluntarism for the past two decades, little attention has been paid to the Free Kindergarten as another sphere in which women were able to steer the agenda of (child) welfare debates as the twentieth century began. The literature on the British context has tended to focus on maternal welfare and motherhood, and older children more generally, and, very often, although not always, has tended to focus on London.<sup>13</sup> Lynn Abrams’ and

Linda Mahood's studies of orphans, and on juvenile reformatories, respectively, are important examples of work that focuses on the Scottish context (though not on kindergartens), while Seth Koven's 1993 discussion of voluntary action and child welfare from 1840 to 1914 considered the Bristol-based reformer Mary Carpenter and her work with ragged and criminal children alongside the later (London-based) activities of Mary Ward, and Margaret and Rachel Macmillan.<sup>14</sup> His interest, particularly in regard to the latter, however, was less to do with their advocacy of nursery schools *per se*, than with the insights that all these women's work offered into the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector.

Likewise, again in the British context, the way that the practice of kindergarten as a mode of 'Spiritual Motherhood' can be understood as part of the broader movement for women's rights, and one which sought to develop professional spheres of activity which correlated with concepts of 'womanliness,' has not, with the exception of Brehony's work, been studied to any extent.<sup>15</sup> Far more attention has been paid to how this nexus of concerns was played out in Europe (especially in Germany and Scandinavia), with Allen's work of particular importance because of its detailed analysis of the praxis of kindergarten in Germany, as well as her comparative work on that nation and the U.S.<sup>16</sup> Her subsequent work on feminism and motherhood in western Europe, alongside that of historians such as James Albisetti, Susan Brantly and Marilyn Scott, has provided a clear sense of the place of kindergarten within unfolding debates about women's work and women's nature as the twentieth century began.<sup>17</sup> Finally, that Free Kindergartens might represent a gendered approach to the transformation of urban space, one that complemented the work of housing

reformers such as the more widely-studied Octavia Hill, has not yet been a matter for consideration.<sup>18</sup>

Through its focus on the St Saviour's Child Garden (SSCG) and its principal founder and teacher, Lilian (known as Lileen) Hardy (1872-1947), the woman we see in Figure Two, this article seeks to offer a preliminary exposition of these issues. Most simply, it presents as detailed a case study as is possible of one particular kindergarten, thereby addressing Brehony's lament at the 'little' we know about such institutions. At the same time, to follow the process through which Hardy became a kindergartner, and to chart her first decade of work, allows the suggestion that the SSCG, and the wider context (physical and social) in which it operated, represents something of a cross-section of contemporary ideas about women's rights, the nature of women's (professional) work and their influence on the formation of particular ideas about (primarily in this instance) child welfare and the transformation of urban space. As noted, ideas about 'Spiritual Motherhood' or, in Karen Offen's term, the 'relational feminism' which it exemplified, have been largely absent from such discussions in the British context, yet, in the Canongate we see at work women who, as Offen puts it, placed an emphasis 'on women's rights *as women* (defined principally by their childbearing and/or nurturing capacities) in relation to men. It insisted on *women's* distinctive contributions in these roles to the broader society' (original italics). Not just Hardy, but many of the women with whom she collaborated, saw what they did as uniquely suited to women's nature and a means through which they could enact their civic responsibility to those worse off than themselves. Such a feminism Offen contrasts, while acknowledging that the positions were not necessarily so polarised, with an 'individualist feminism' concerned with 'more

abstract concepts of individual human rights,' and which was often linked to access to higher education, the professions and the vote.<sup>19</sup> These women we also find in the Old Town, where some of the first women doctors in Britain were active in welfare work.

Such a discussion thus expands our understanding of women's philanthropic praxis in the early 1900s and the complex points of view it represented. Moreover, in the Scottish context, it builds on the wave of scholarship which has sought to document the many women who innovated in social and urban reform at this date; thus revising an overwhelmingly male narrative,<sup>20</sup> a response, perhaps, to Mahood's plea in 1995 to go beyond histories of the 'heroes and "occasional heroines"' who people histories of welfare.<sup>21</sup> In particular it augments Megan Smitley's work on the construction of a 'feminine public sphere' with evidence of arenas and networks beyond those of the temperance movement, Liberal party and suffrage organizations, and associated with evangelical Protestantism, through which women were able, in her phrase, 'to express their citizenship.'<sup>22</sup> It also complements a long overdue revisionism in Scottish urban history, which has begun to look beyond canonical figures such as H.D.Littlejohn and Patrick Geddes to the women who re-thought what the city might be in this period.<sup>23</sup>

The focus on a Scottish example also raises the question of the extent to which location played a part in the founding of the SSCG. Certainly, Edinburgh's Old Town was a fertile ground for the Free Kindergarten movement and Revisionist Froebelianism. The SSCG was the second Free Kindergarten to be founded in the city, by 1914 it housed five, nearly half of the dozen in Britain that have been identified by Brehony.<sup>24</sup> The Royal Mile was also host to a number of initiatives run by the Edinburgh Play Centres Society, and the Open



Spaces Committee of the Edinburgh Social Union, both of which sought to provide space for recreation and children's play in sites up and down the Royal Mile.<sup>25</sup> Hardy's training and subsequent career suggests that location was significant, in particular her personal connections to those who advocated progressive approaches to the reform of urban space in the city. More broadly, her project connects with existing traditions in Scottish child welfare practice. These, as Lynn Abrams notes, tended to favour boarding out and institutional care provided by religious charities, and the promotion of a model of the family as 'independent, hardworking, moral, sober and untainted by urban vice' drawn from rural andcrofting example.<sup>26</sup> The SSCG, and the Episcopalian church which supported it, placed much emphasis on 'character' while the innovative nature of the Free Kindergarten might also be understood as a further example of the belief that Scottish welfare practice was more humanitarian than that of England.<sup>27</sup>

That it is possible to offer a case study reflects the fact that the SSCG was relatively well-documented during its first decade of existence. The experimental, and prototypical, nature of the movement required of Hardy an ability to harness print media in order to publicize and promote her work (and the cause) as well as to raise funds for it. The main source is the book that Hardy published in 1912, *Diary of a Free Kindergarten*.<sup>28</sup> This has often been cited by historians, and is the subject of an illuminating analysis by Kristen D. Nawrotzki.<sup>29</sup> This covered the period from November 1906 to April 1912 (a very slightly enlarged edition appeared in 1917). Alongside this better-known work, are other hitherto untapped sources. These include a pamphlet, 'The Life History of a Slum Child,' issued towards the end of 1909, and a series of *Annual Reports* which began in December 1910.<sup>30</sup> These

featured accounts of the year's activities, photographs, and listed kindergarten staff and donors. Old St Paul's church magazine also featured news, while the Froebelian journal, *Child Life*, made occasional reference to Hardy's work.

The particular contexts that generated each of these publications, and the publications themselves, will be discussed in more detail below. The immediate point here is to acknowledge that they are, of course, not unproblematic sources. As polemical as they are documentary they conform to the conventions of a well-established philanthropic persuasive discourse – one of contrast, transformation and redemption - and, as Nawrotzki notes, would have been very familiar and resonant to their likely readership.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, a careful parsing of their content provides sufficient evidence to chart the main episodes in the early years of the SSCG, the nature of its organization and its attempt to make, as it declared in the imprimatur on its *Reports*, 'A Contribution to the Solution of the Slum Problem in Edinburgh.' It also provides material which augments the detailed accounts of reformers and reformed – of philanthropy 'as lived' – that scholars such as Seth Koven and Ellen Ross have produced, and offers insights into the experience and motivations not just of Hardy, but also her charges and their families.

To follow Hardy is, then, to see how a kindergartner was equally professional educator, reformer, social worker and propagandist. We also see how much her work was embedded in, and in part derived from, a whole network of women-led philanthropy in the Old Town of Edinburgh. Together they created a vibrant women and child-centred proto-Welfare State in Scotland's capital.

**‘To be a kindergartner is the perfect development of womanliness.’**

Although Hardy was careful to document her Free Kindergarten, she has proved to be an elusive figure to trace. What becomes apparent from the sources available is that, by accident or design, she found herself always in locations at the forefront of progressive thinking. This tells us much about the social and cultural values that shaped the Free Kindergarten movement in England and Scotland, as well as providing evidence of how its ideals of were internationalized.<sup>32</sup>

Records show that she was born into a lower-middle-class family in Alderbury, Wiltshire, in 1872. Resident in Salisbury by 1881, her father was a pharmacist; she was one of seven siblings. The family was sufficiently affluent to employ a mother’s help and a general servant, and (perhaps) to pay for the training that allowed her, in 1901, to take up a post as kindergarten teacher and governess for a family in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh.<sup>33</sup> She was then one of an increasingly common type, a middle-class woman who earned her own living, and this at the time when the new profession of kindergartner was being established in the British Isles.

As noted, Von Marenholtz-Bülow’s singling out of women as kindergarten teachers was important. It maintained Froebel’s belief in women’s innate maternal instinct and used it, as Allen argued, as a means ‘to improve women’s status by providing them with a vital and recognized social role.’ Brehony puts it more forcefully when he argues that the stress on a kindergartner’s “womanliness” ‘supported and enabled middle-class women to gain employment.’<sup>34</sup> It thus paralleled the way that women in the contemporary housing reform movement used the synonymy of their gender with domesticity to bring themselves into

positions of influence within the public sphere.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, Hardy's choice of where to train as a kindergartner placed her in a site where Revisionist Froebelianism and Spiritual Motherhood came together: the Sesame House for Home-Life Training in St John's Wood, London. This had been opened in 1899 and was modelled on Pestalozzi-Froebel House.

Von Marenholtz Bülow's and Schrader-Breymann's work to keep (and develop) the Froebelian flame alive in Germany meant that their institution became a key location for 'curricular innovation and reform' for subsequent generations of kindergartners and those interested in educational change, and it was widely visited.<sup>36</sup> Among those visitors were the founders of a private institution called the Sesame Club, which had been formed in 1895, in premises at Victoria Street, London (from 1897 at 28-29 Dover Street, Piccadilly). Members were united by an interest in 'the new principles in literature, art [and] science' while their special concern was in making more widely known 'improved methods of education,' and in particular, 'the true and natural Pestalozzi-Froebel System.'<sup>37</sup>

In its first years the Club was very much a salon at which members heard concerts and lectures (their often Germanic subject matter is worth noting). These were diverse: from a commentary on Wagner's *Der Meistersinger* to talks on 'Röntgen Rays and Wireless Telegraphy,' and one on 'Nietzsche – his influence on the Age'.<sup>38</sup> The majority of lectures, however, were on education (meetings of the London branch of the Child Study Association were also held at the premises). By 1899 this predominant concern led members to embark on a more active scheme to realize its progressive ideals in the founding of Sesame House. The idea was suggested by Alice Buckton, a woman with a background in settlement work who had spent six months at Pestalozzi-Froebel House.<sup>39</sup> That Buckton saw Sesame House not just

as a means to introduce Revisionist Froebelianism to British shores, but also the ideals of Spiritual Motherhood it embodied, is clear from the speech she gave to members in November 1898.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout, Buckton framed the proposal for Sesame House in terms of the contemporary woman's movement in Britain, which she seems to have identified as too devoted to an individualist feminism. She compared and contrasted the native movement's relative progress and nature with that of Germany and Scandinavia, noting that in these nations 'the woman question is developing some riper, and later aspects from which we may learn.' Referencing Laura Marholm, Karl Pearson and the work of Patrick Geddes and Arthur Thomson, she argued that while emancipation had brought British (middle- and upper-class) women benefits in terms of education, personal freedom and 'such questions of women's equal worth with man as a human soul,' many felt that this had been at the neglect of 'woman's personal life and needs.' An over-emphasis on woman's intellectual development had not, she declared, satisfied women 'it has left them, in the end, conscious of a great blank, sad and disappointed.'

Invoking instead Froebel's call for 'the full womanly development of women' Buckton looked to the new kindergarten movement as a means through which woman could rediscover her role as 'the fosterer and nourisher of life' (compared with man 'the initiator of life') and find 'her spiritual motherhood.' England, she declared, lagged behind America, Finland and Stockholm where daughter institutions of Pestalozzi-Froebel House had already been established. Moreover '...to the wonder of other lands be it spoken, [in England] there is no free kindergarten for poorer classes.' She therefore demanded 'how many poor children in

this country would benefit by the womanly care and natural education that is the lot of happier children in an ideal kindergarten?’

Sesame House was thus founded in order ‘to fit girls and women more fully for the woman’s life, [and] as its secondary purpose the preparing of girls who need to earn their livelihood as certificated lady nurses to children, as kindergarten teachers, and as nursery governesses...’<sup>41</sup> Buckton described its primary constituency as girls before marriage who had completed school or college, and who would benefit from employing ‘the out-giving side of their nature,’ adding that kindergarten was especially appropriate for those ‘unsuited for college life or for settlement work in the slums.’ Alongside them would study young women like Hardy who would pursue kindergarten as an appropriately womanly career and earn the requisite Froebel certificate. Students could either board, or attend daily.<sup>42</sup> Hardy enrolled in its opening year.<sup>43</sup>

Her training encompassed ‘the theory and history of education, development of the child, natural science, vegetable and flower gardening, hygiene, household management, singing, elocution,’ all organized around ‘the daily life in the home...’<sup>44</sup> Students were also each responsible for a small group of children from the House’s kindergarten. This was initially described as a Free Kindergarten. Notwithstanding its location in leafy Acacia Avenue, St John’s Wood (near Regent’s Park), this seems to have been the intention, however contemporary accounts suggest that it did not succeed entirely in this aim and was also attended by children from better-off families.

Nevertheless it followed the Berlin model in its simulation of daily domestic life; unsurprising given that its head was Annette Hamminck-Schepel, who had spent 25 years as

director of Pestalozzi-Froebel House. Buckton was her deputy. Children aged between two and six followed a curriculum of lessons (modified Froebel Occupations such as modelling clay and sewing) interspersed with free play and a run in the playground. Time preparing their room for play was an integral part of Schrader-Breymann's method as was tending to pets and to their own garden plots. This nurturing of flora and fauna simulated the nurturing they themselves received from their teachers, and was reiterated in the way they were encouraged to serve each other and their community: not just making their playroom clean, but pouring water for the next child when they took turns to wash after dinner. As a journalist noted 'this obligation of service to their neighbours is impressed on the young minds ...being one of the main precepts of the system of education.' She added 'the aim being in all things to develop the young feeling, the character and the faculty, rather than to instruct and give school knowledge, for which, as is allowed by all educationists, a life trained in ready observation and right feeling is the only sound basis.'<sup>45</sup>

This was the environment which shaped Hardy. It certainly left her a convinced advocate of Spiritual Motherhood, as her later appeal for a co-worker suggests:

A kindergarten is an ideal field for self-development. In no area of the world's work is there anything more satisfactory, or encouraging or beautiful, or which evokes more from a woman and enables her to give more of herself ... To be a kindergartner is the perfect development of womanliness – a working with God at the very fountain of artistic and intellectual power and moral character. It is therefore the highest finish that can be given to a woman's education to be trained for a kindergartner.<sup>46</sup>

But it took her several years to realize in the SSCG what she described as ‘the great desire of my heart.’<sup>47</sup> In the meantime she needed to find work. An article in *Child Life*, which reported frequently about Sesame House, noted that its graduates could expect to earn between £25 and £40 a year and that a considerable number of ladies applied to the school, ‘bespeaking’ students before they had completed their studies.<sup>48</sup> That this might have been the case for Hardy is suggested by the fact that her employer, Mrs Alexander Whyte, is listed as a member of the House’s Advisory Council.<sup>49</sup> It was a fortuitous appointment for it brought her into direct contact with women philanthropists, and the man whose writings on gender had been central to Buckton's theorization of Sesame House. Hardy’s experience once in Edinburgh thus exemplifies Smitley’s characterization of ‘the web of associations, institutions and discourses’ that created a feminine public sphere up and down the Royal Mile.

Jane Whyte’s (1857-1944) significance was, until recently, overshadowed by the reputation of her husband, Alexander (1836-1921), Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (elected 1898) and from 1909 Principal of Edinburgh University’s Divinity Faculty. New scholarship has shown her to have been a remarkable individual, who, from her home in Charlotte Square, formed part of a group of women who did much to develop and support new modes of voluntary welfare work in the Edinburgh slums from the 1880s onwards.<sup>50</sup> These emphasized the transformation of existing spaces and environments, rather than the wholesale demolition of buildings or dispersal of people; this at a time when large-scale clearance programmes had not long been undertaken in the Old Town, causing further overcrowding.



As her involvement in Sesame House suggests, Whyte should be understood as an exponent of Spiritual Motherhood, and one with a specifically Scottish inflection given the nature of her social circle. From the early 1880s she was associated with the Secular Positivist group that met for philosophical discussions in the nearby home of James (an advocate for women's education) and Edith Oliphant.<sup>51</sup> A better-known member of the group was Patrick Geddes (who married Edith's sister Anna Morton in 1886). It was during this period that he developed his ideas of the complementarity of the sexes cited by Buxton. As Helen Meller notes, he would translate these ideas to his evolving theories of urban planning. Thus:

Men were the creators, the actors, who engaged vigorously with the public sphere; women were the best helpmates who attended to the private sphere, the home and, in their communities, brought their nurturing skills to place and people, thus contributing much to bringing men's plans to fruition.<sup>52</sup>

Geddes's casting of women as helpmates may be seen in the philanthropic work he helped to initiate in Edinburgh's Old Town. This began in 1885 with the Edinburgh Social Union (ESU) which sought 'to bring together all those who feel that the misery of the poor arises in a large measure from the want of sympathy and fellowship between different classes.'<sup>53</sup> Like many of the projects with which Geddes is identified, his active involvement with the ESU was short-lived (the embodiment of 'man the creator'). He worked mostly with its Arts Guild (later the Open Spaces Committee) which sought to encourage small-scale improvements to existing Old Town buildings through, for example, the painting of murals and the provision of window boxes. It was much inspired in such practices by the Kyrle

Society, founded in 1876 by Miranda Hill, whose sister, the better-known Octavia, was a major influence on the Union's other, and much more substantial, branch of work in housing. Before marrying Geddes, Anna Morton had been very interested in the Hills' activities and it seems reasonable to speculate that it was at her suggestion that he and James Oliphant visited Octavia Hill in London, as well as branches of the Kyrle Society across England, in 1884.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the Union's Housing Guild was founded to buy and manage tenement property in the Old Town on the principles of rehabilitation and management developed by Octavia Hill since the 1860s.

Whyte was a significant benefactor of the ESU. She attended its founding meeting, and, in 1887, it was she, with her brother Dr Alexander Barbour, who provided funds to buy one of the first properties that the Guild managed.<sup>55</sup> It was duly renovated and a lady housing manager appointed to oversee it. But Geddes played no role in the Guild, which quickly expanded its portfolio of properties to sites further up and down the Royal Mile, including several in the Canongate. By 1901 it owned and managed 24 properties which housed 650 families. All this work was organized and enacted by women, a formidable group who, as Veronica Burbridge notes, made it a significant element in Edinburgh's housing scene before 1914.<sup>56</sup>

It is probable that it was through Whyte that Hardy came to know the Old Town as site of women's philanthropic activism. As well as the ESU, this also included women members of the Edinburgh branch of the Charity Organization Society while the city's community of Medical Women also served the women and children of the area in various capacities. A good number of women also worked under the direction of another charismatic

male leader, Canon Albert Laurie of Old St Paul's Church (OSP), which occupied a site further up the Royal Mile, at Carrubber's Close. Edinburgh's Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches had long been active in the Canongate, but the 1890s saw the Episcopal Church develop a programme of social work there can be understood as seeking to place what was a minority faith in Scotland at the forefront of welfare provision in the Old Town.<sup>57</sup> This emerged from a city-wide mission, begun in 1892, but quickly become an enterprise that aimed at transforming the inner and outer lives of the poor in the slums that formed OSP's hinterland. By 1895, the church had established a club for boys and young men in Carrubber's Close, and opened the St Saviour's Mission at 181 Canongate.

Laurie (1886-1937) took over this work when he became Rector in 1897 (he had hitherto been one of the church's team of clergy). In the same way that Geddes's vision was enacted by a predominantly female workforce, likewise was Laurie's. Between 1897 and 1906, he oversaw the establishment of a Ladies' Settlement which ran a girls' and young women's club, and a roster of women district visitors. In 1902, the church took a three-year lease on a former type foundry in the grounds of Whitefoord House (a large mansion) at the Holyrood end of the Canongate. Described as 'a kind of modified "People's Palace"' it comprised a club room for men and boys, a large gymnasium and a Dispensary (a clinic offering basic and affordable medical care) run by volunteer doctors (one male, one female, of whom more below) and a team of nurses.<sup>58</sup> The latter were encouraged to live in the district, something made easier when benefactors enabled the church to buy and renovate a property at Plainstones Close (222 Canongate). Re-named St Saviour's Hostel it opened in 1907 and, echoing contemporary settlement practice, provided accommodation not just for the nurses

but also ‘other friends of St Saviour’s who desire to live and work in immediate touch with the various activities of the mission.’<sup>59</sup> During this period, the mission was also relocated to premises at Brown’s Close (79 Canongate).

Neither OSP’s social welfare programme, nor that of other philanthropists at work in the Old Town, was, as yet, uniquely focused on its youngest inhabitants. Although what can be said is that the woman voluntary worker, in whatever capacity, was a familiar figure one who occupied a very female charitable landscape. A 1901 directory shows that children were catered for primarily in the provision of orphanages, clothing for the destitute, of free school meals, and day nurseries or crèches for working mothers.<sup>60</sup> Little of this affected those who were not of school age. Given that the Old Town as a whole was just the sort of slum district to which a Free Kindergarten might be suited (overcrowding figures matched those of London’s East End), and the ideals of Spiritual Motherhood already pervaded philanthropy in the area, conditions were ripe for the movement to make its mark in the city. In addition, there was one very precise reason that, as a contemporary wrote, ‘there is especial need for such work in Edinburgh’ (indeed, Scotland), because children did not enter school until the age of five (compared with three in England). They were thus deemed to be particularly vulnerable to the influence of the street (especially those whose mothers worked). The same author noted, ‘They naturally absorb from these surroundings bad habits and evil impressions, which years of after effort may fail to overcome.’<sup>61</sup> This illustration from Hardy’s *Diary* speaks volumes if understood in the light of such concerns [Figure Four].

The first attempt to address such anxieties was in 1903 with the founding of the Free Kindergarten for City Children at premises in Galloway’s Entry (it moved to Reid’s Court in

1906; both were near to OSP's mission hall).<sup>62</sup> Funded by a bequest from a Miss Howden, it was run on the principles laid down by Pestalozzi-Froebel House. She had taught at Milton House Board School, which stood nearby on the Canongate, a role which gave her first-hand knowledge of the conditions in which her pupils dwelt and the effect it had on their potential. Hardy was involved in some capacity from the start. In 1903 she is listed as the recipient for any donations readers of *Child Life* might send; the fact her Charlotte Square address is used suggests Jane Whyte's approval and sympathy for her extra-mural activity. By 1905 she was the author of a description of the kindergarten for *Child Life*, and in 1906 was listed on its committee in its *Annual Report* (with Whyte and Laurie noted as those who had 'expressed approval' of the scheme).<sup>63</sup>

The proximity of the Reid Court Kindergarten to sites occupied by various aspects of OSP's missionary work may have led Hardy to meet Laurie and, in time, suggest that she open her own kindergarten in church premises and under its auspices. He recorded her offer to establish the school in a Parish Letter of July 1906. The inclusion of a kindergarten fitted well with what the OSP had achieved so far, and would place his church in the vanguard of welfare work in the city and complete his overall vision for his church. It also reflected the belief noted by Cunningham that it was on urban children that the future depended and the Scottish reliance on religious bodies for welfare provision. Laurie wrote that it was with 'little children [that] our great hope lies – let us get the children and, if possible, keep them.' If they could begin with the three and four year olds, he argued:

Then move them through clubs, gymnasiums, and past the age of Confirmation into the Communicants' Guild we ought to be able to keep them in close touch with the

Church and our dear Lord, through and in the Church. Then with various agencies to meet the special needs of the special classes, and call out from them the unselfish manly and womanly capacities, we may, please God, in a small way be able to fulfill the mission of the church to the district, by turning out not only good Church-people but good citizens.<sup>64</sup>

Hardy's decision to work with the church suggests an empathy with its ethos – and the *Diary* often invokes the Christian faith - although she seems not to have been a Communicant or permanent member of the Congregation. On a practical level the OSP could provide her with premises at its mission hall in Brown's Close and with the children who would benefit from her services through its existing programme of social work (although her connection to the Reid's Court kindergarten, which was over-subscribed, could equally have given her a ready intake).<sup>65</sup> That she wished to start a kindergarten of her own suggests a woman of ambition, and one who, having seen the success of ventures by other women up and down the Canongate and its environs, was encouraged to emulate them. It seems that it was her determination that finally persuaded Laurie to agree to her proposition as he had initially wanted a school rather than a nursery school.<sup>66</sup> Hardy committed to support the daily running of her kindergarten from her own pocket, the result, she wrote, of 'economy during the time she was a teacher.'<sup>67</sup> Her efforts came to fruition when, in November 1906, the SSCG opened at Brown's Close.

### **St Saviour's Child Garden**

The SSCG occupied the main room of the OSP's mission hall which had been created from two old cottages which stood at the foot of Brown's Close. Within this existing environment Hardy brought together Revisionist Froebelianism and Spiritual Motherhood to create a setting that would transform the lives of her infant charges. This began with the physical form of the kindergarten room. Each Monday morning into this panelled space were brought tables and chairs, appropriately-themed pictures, and the paraphernalia of kindergarten: toys such as dolls and cradles, pets (doves, canaries), dustpans, dusters and washing up bowls, as well as equipment for the modified Occupations (beads, clay, fabric); a process Hardy herself described as 'a great transformation.'<sup>68</sup> She made a curtain from Liberty fabric to close off the altar and hall furniture used for services over the weekend. Each Friday, in turn, the elements of her kindergarten had to be put away. [Figures Five and One]

Central to the Pestalozzi Froebel House method was the creation of a garden to complement the interior space of the kindergarten. Although there had been some talk that the SSCG might take place in OSP itself, behind the mission hall lay a piece of wasteland that Hardy realized could be used, after a good deal of work, for her own garden and play space. It had resulted from the demolition of old houses on the site by the City Council and was intended to be an open space in what was a densely packed close. Hardy was granted use of it for one shilling a year. By the end of 1906 work began to clear the site of rubbish and debris. Next, and with advice from Patrick Geddes (likely thanks to Jane Whyte), a lawn, sand-bed and two red-ash playgrounds were laid out, so that outdoor play and gardening work could begin.<sup>69</sup> [Figure Two]

Here, then, was an environment at once familiar and unfamiliar. A converted single room in a somewhat dilapidated dwelling it was just the sort of environment in which the children themselves lived. Indeed, Hardy noted that the children ‘naturally supposed it to be my dwelling house.’<sup>70</sup> At the same time, this was a space that was clean, well-lit and well-ventilated, as well as properly furnished. It embodied therefore – as did the creation of the garden from wasteland – the sort of transformation that the children would themselves undergo as they were exposed to the new influences and values of kindergarten. It also paralleled the work of the ESU, whose Housing and Arts Guild workers advocated the renovation of existing environments into something better.

The children’s metamorphosis began the moment they left home and clustered around the mission hall door awaiting entry at 9.30 am. Upon admission they donned a pinafore (blue with red/pink collar and cuffs) from their own peg (signalled by a picture postcard pasted above it). Hardy undertook a daily inspection of hands and faces for cleanliness, and once passed, kindergarten work could begin. Adhering to the methods in which she had been trained, the children first dusted the room, and next fed the pets, before they could proceed to the Occupations and other play. Initially Hardy had them only in the mornings, but the completion of the garden in the early summer of 1907 allowed them to attend also in the afternoons, when they could occupy themselves in gardening and free play; she wrote of her desire for them to be ‘outdoors’ as much as possible.<sup>71</sup> Later, Hardy described all this work and its purpose:

The kindergarten discards the abstract learning and instruction which have no relation to the child’s physical, mental or spiritual needs, and places him instead in a little



world of action where he can develop his personality along the lines of his own natural activities, his social life by contact with his peers. In childhood there is only one true means of real self-expression, and that is *play*. Organised play, is, in the child-stage – *work!*<sup>72</sup>

Initially, the responsibility for the administration of the kindergarten, as well as its day-to-day running and the teaching, seems to have been Hardy's alone. However, it is clear throughout the *Diary* how much she benefited from the wider network of philanthropic endeavour that was directed towards the Canongate. Most immediately this came from her association with OSP. Laurie was a stalwart supporter of her work, conducting a weekly service for the children, by whom he was much loved [Figure Six]. But it was female voluntary effort that underpinned the bulk of what Hardy did. Within the confines of Brown's Close this began with young women assistants. In the first year or so, she had intermittent help from someone trained at Pestalozzi-Froebel House, but as her appeal for a co-worker suggests, she was continually in need of more and permanent help. Writing in the OSP magazine in October 1907 she reminded women of their duty: 'Every woman, by the very fact that she is a woman, is responsible for neglected children – those who do not get their rightful inheritance.'

The appeal worked. By 1909, Hardy had a staff of five. She and two other kindergartners taught the smaller children (who joined aged three) while the older children were taught by a trained teacher, and a graduate of Somerville College. There was also a physical training teacher.<sup>73</sup> Two are described as volunteers, the others were paid. It was in

supporting such expenses that many other women awoke to their responsibility. A *Diary* entry for July 1907 lists the gifts – material and in kind – that helped the kindergarten survive its first year. The donors are predominantly female and New Town residents: their donations ranging from toys, pinafores and handkerchiefs to plants for the garden and kindergarten material. Connecting Hardy to a wider female community, she also thanks Miss Wragge and Julia Lloyd ‘for many ideas.’ Both were contemporary kindergartners, the latter had taught at Sesame House before setting up a Free Kindergarten at Birmingham. The women of the ESU gave further invaluable support. They lent storage space, but also worked to improve the environs that overlooked the mission hall and garden (it managed an adjacent property). One of its members, Helen Taylor Balfour donated an annual week’s country holiday for the children at her home in Westfield, Dalkeith. Finally, Whyte seems to have been the conduit to significant help on a number of occasions: first with Geddes, and later, when the kindergarten moved to Chessel’s Court, persuading an illustrious visitor to Charlotte Square to pay for the construction of an outdoor shelter.<sup>74</sup>

As Hardy’s daily inspection for cleanliness suggests, she was much preoccupied with the children’s general health, if surprised that they were ‘wonderfully healthy considering the lives they lead. Several of them don’t go to bed till their parents do.’ Medical attention became an integral part of the SSCG with daily care provided by the nurses from OSP’s Dispensary, which stood close by. The Dispensary also connected her to the community of Medical Women in the city and provided the next addition to her team. In May 1907, Hardy announced that ‘one of Edinburgh’s cleverest lady doctors’ had consented to be the kindergarten’s medical inspector. This was Dr Isabel Venters (1869-1940). A beneficiary of

the campaigns that sought to open up the professions to women, she had trained with Dr Sophia Jex-Blake in Edinburgh, the key figure in the fight for women to gain access to medical training in Scotland, and on Blake's death took over the running of the Bruntsfield Hospital for Women and Children which she had founded. Like many such women Venters felt the privilege of education required of her a life of service, and while she maintained a private practice in the New Town, the majority of her time was spent working for the urban poor in and around the Canongate, where she was known as 'the doctor wi' the reid heid.'<sup>75</sup>

Such connections placed Hardy and her kindergarten within a nexus of women-led philanthropy in the Old Town. It is arguable whether she could have survived without it. But she was equally dependent on the children who formed the roll of her kindergarten, and the mothers who were prepared to let them attend. How they were selected Hardy explained in the *Diary*:

The Rector chooses the children. He has worked in the Canongate for 19 years and knows the people very well. He chose the best families for a beginning and although the people are very poor, the children are mostly clean considering the circumstances. She had earlier described two of her first three charges as 'just the right kind of child to make the beginning easy – intelligent, friendly, talkative and quite at home' (how the third child was the wrong kind is not specified).<sup>76</sup> Since some of the children are listed in OSP's baptismal records, it is probable that their parents had become church members as a result of its mission work. Others may have come to Hardy on the recommendation of District Visitors, a process she mentions in an entry in Easter 1908.

Given Hardy's reference to Laurie's choice of 'the best families' it is difficult to know how bad the conditions were in which the children dwelt. Although poor, the occupations listed in baptismal records suggest regular employment: brewery work was common (two maltmen, a cellarman and a labourer), others were a dental instrument maker, a brassmoulder and a lamplighter. The sole mother listed, whose daughter was illegitimate, worked as a bookfolder. Although there were instances of children with particularly feckless parents – Hardy gives a vivid portrait of a child whose favourite game was to play at being drunk in imitation of her elders<sup>77</sup> – the overall impression is of hardworking fathers, and mothers who, overwhelmed by childbearing and exhausted by maintaining a home in overcrowded tenement accommodation, exemplified the women whom Von Marhenholtz-Bülow argued should entrust their children to kindergarten (the lamplighter was the father of seven children, born between 1887 and 1904; his wife died prematurely in January 1914 at the age of 48).<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, they were not so defeated by their environments that they did not take advantage of opportunities for their children. Hardy reported that Venters told her that the kindergarten was a very popular institution among the mothers and that they were grateful for the changes they saw in their children.<sup>79</sup>

The idea that by attending to the children the parents might be reached and reformed in turn (thus addressing the slum problem more broadly) was central to the Free Kindergarten movement. Hardy wrote 'Every church ought to have a kindergarten for the sake of both generations. It is much the most easy and natural method of getting a welcome in the homes. "She who takes a child by the hand takes the mother by the heart."' <sup>80</sup> So, textbook kindergartner that she was, Hardy lived in the Canongate (initially in St Saviour's Hostel,

then at Chessel's Court) and took every opportunity to involve the parents, the mothers in particular. This began with the simplest of items: the children's pinafores. Provided by the school (and donated by benefactors) these, she wrote, 'help to give the children a sense of order, cleanliness and self respect.' Like any uniform they signalled the child's belonging to an institution. At the same time, they were intended 'as a link between home and school', since each weekend they went home with the children for the mothers to launder.<sup>81</sup> Hardy slowly built up the rapport during the kindergarten's first years. Mothers were invited to the children's Christmas parties, and the summer garden parties held to thank benefactors. By June 1908 they, in turn, invited Hardy to join them for a picnic at Cramond; the following autumn they collected sufficient pennies to buy a new oratory table for the kindergarten. This culminated in the formation of a Mother's Guild, instigated and run by the women, 'to aim at co-operation between school and home'. Rules included putting children to bed at a fixed early hour.<sup>82</sup> Thus was character built across the generations.

It was not just the mothers who became part of the kindergarten community. Fathers and brothers helped too, particularly in the hard work of making the Brown's Close garden and, later, decorating the new accommodation at Chessel's Court and preparing its grounds. Hardy writes of this activity with admiration and gratitude (noting that parents had given up the autumn bank holiday to assist her, she addressed her wealthy readers, who had not helped at all, 'Hide your heads ye "better classes" and be ashamed.'). And although she was often perplexed by the children, particularly their use of the Scots language, it is clear that she was much attached to them, writing, for example, of 'my best beloved Maggie', who briefly left

her for the Board School, but returned almost immediately.<sup>83</sup> Many of her anecdotes have the tone of the doting, proud parent.

It is from such comments that a sense of Hardy as herself (rather than professional kindergartner) emerges. That, culturally, she was of a progressive inclination is suggested not just in the choice of a Liberty fabric for a curtain, but a reference to asking an artist friend to design patterns for her aprons (the friend replied scornfully ‘did I think I was going to redeem the world with the design on my pinafore?’ So Hardy ‘concocted’ her own design).<sup>84</sup> From the informality of their correspondence, she also seems to have been on good terms with Geddes and, as her interest in embroidery and textiles suggests, to have shared the Arts and Crafts movement’s belief in the integration of beauty with everyday life. And, although for the most part her tone is that of a serious and devout woman, it also becomes clear that, on many occasions, her work was personally liberating and enabled her to move beyond class boundaries. Describing a working party formed of herself, and assorted fathers, brothers, and mothers, to prepare the new garden at Brown’s Close she wrote: ‘There is a delightful naturalness in our personal relations all working together. To exchange tools with a man and take a turn at his job gives a pleasant intimacy which nothing else brings.’<sup>85</sup> That such intimacy was rare also comes across. Following the move to Chessel’s Court, and another working party (there were many), one of the mothers inspected her new quarters. Admiring its simplicity – ‘If ye put onything mair in it ye would spile it’ she added ‘it must be lonesome for ye. If ye only had some yin to come in nights, to share your bed.’ Hardy added, ‘I stopped dead!’<sup>86</sup>

At the same time as the *Diary* entries frequently acknowledge the humanity of the community in which she found herself, there are many occasions on which Hardy's writing takes on a different tone. This reflects another aspect of the Free Kindergarten movement: the idea that working-class parents were 'unable' to raise their children properly. This functioned as a pretext to legitimize an emerging profession and to sanction the removal, however temporary, of children from one form of home to another. Thus in appealing for funds and support for her work, Hardy often presented her charges in abject and endangered terms, as her anecdote about the child imitating her drunken parents suggests. Photographs were also used to signal the lack of womanliness and responsibility of Canongate parents (as noted in the discussion of Figure Four, while Figure Seven casts Hardy as a substitute mother, surrounded by her charges and cradling a doll). This was reiterated by the fact that, in a departure from standard Free Kindergarten practice, she and Laurie agreed that the children should remain under her tutelage until the age of eight (Standard One of the Board School). Letting them go at five 'while still in the plastic stage of infancy' into a Board School of 1500 or 1600 scholars would undo the careful work achieved thus far. It was only with prolonged exposure to kindergarten methods that 'a solid foundation of character' could be fully formed.<sup>87</sup> What this meant is evident in a report on some SSCG children following their transfer to the local school. Four ranked among the best in the class and their teacher wrote: 'A point that is worthy of special mention is the very good behaviour of the children. They are most amenable, very mannerly, kindly natured and truthful always.'<sup>88</sup>

It was this desire to keep the children for longer that placed particular demands on the hall at Brown's Close. Keeping them away from school required the older children to be

taught the 3Rs, ideally in room separate from the younger ones. It was also clear that the SSCG was a going concern; from three to 43 children by 1909. During that same year, however, the money that Hardy had husbanded to support it would run out. These circumstances led to a relocation, a more concerted fundraising campaign, and the formalization of the SSCG's organization.

In September 1908, the SSCG crossed the Canongate and moved into larger and more salubrious premises at 8 Chessel's Court, a former mansion house, with substantial gardens at front and back. The moving costs were minimal because the children's parents worked voluntarily to redecorate and to assist in the removal, however it is unclear how the rent was paid; it was not until 1912 that another female benefactor bought the lease for the church. Here there were sufficient rooms to stream the children by age and begin full elementary-level teaching (Hardy noted that 'some of the mothers are fretting lest their children will be behind [the Board School] and so eventually later in wage earning'; a reminder of their genuine concern for their children's progress).<sup>89</sup> Henceforward her vision was complete: she catered for children from three to eight; there was ample space for nature play and gardening (later augmented by a new garden at the front of Chessel's Court, designed by Norah Geddes, and provided by the ESU's Open Spaces Committee) and even when the children had left her, members of the Edinburgh Play Centres Society, founded in 1910, provided staff to cater for primary school children to play in the early evening. [Figures Six and Eight]

But funds for this expansion needed to be raised. It was at this point that Hardy developed a more systematic approach to publicity. During the first three years of the SSCG's existence she had adopted the practice of sending circular letters about her work to interested



friends.<sup>90</sup> Her first move was to produce an edited version of these letters in mid-1909. This combined hand-written entries (rather than letters proper) with clippings from Old St Paul's church magazine, some of her children's drawings, and photographs. The more personal tone of the writing suggests it had a relatively limited circulation, perhaps to the friendship network of the original recipients.

It was followed in December 1909 by a more publicly-oriented document, the 'Life Story of a Slum Child.' This depicted the progress of a 'nameless lassie' born in a Canongate room to a sixteen-year old mother - the father is described as being in prison - members of a class whom Hardy describes as 'irresponsible, self indulgent, bold.' What prospect, she asked, for this child, left to roam in the street where she was surrounded the temptations of the street with its pubs, licensed dairies, and nowhere to rest or to play. The 'remedy' was what had been started in Brown's Close 'the saving of some hundreds of those little ones ... where the world literally began to be a garden to those children.'

The pamphlet was intended to draw potential benefactors (she named the sum of £150 a year as the cost of its maintenance) to a meeting in December 1909 at the Heriot Row home of Lady Mackenzie, another of Hardy's New Town supporters. In its wake a committee was established 'of responsible business men and others, including ladies' to oversee the running of the kindergarten and continue the fundraising. This required a more consistent dissemination of Hardy's work. Thus *Annual Reports* were issued from 1910. As with the 'Life Story' pamphlet, these took the approach of rendering the children's conditions in extreme tones. The first declared:

Our plan is that fifty of the youngest children in the Canongate (from the age of three), who are in the most dangerous conditions – living in houses that are not homes – under conditions unfit frequently even for the training of animals – shall have those evil influences counterbalanced as far as may be.

In this way, the slum problem in Edinburgh would, ‘in the course of a generation, be greatly modified.’<sup>91</sup>

The final element in this publicity work was the publication of the *Diary of a Free Kindergarten* in the autumn of 1912. This covered the period from November 1906 to April 1912 and was an edited version of the 1909 diary. Hardy changed the children’s names and those of the adults associated with her work who wished to remain anonymous. Some entries were excised, and more added, while the church magazine entries were either cut or assimilated into diary format. No drawings were included, but 16 photographs of the kindergarten’s activities and of the surrounding Canongate were. The noted American kindergartner Kate Douglas Wiggin provided an Introduction. Its royalties, presumably, were added to the SSCG’s income, which, by virtue of the more organized fundraising of which it formed part, seems to have been steady at least until the outbreak of war. Only once did the OSP appeal for Diocesan Funds, and then only for a minimal amount.<sup>92</sup>

By 1914, Hardy had succeeded in realizing her dream. She remained at the helm of the SSCG until 1927, when she retired. A succession of equally dedicated women followed, and generations of Old Town children would attend the Kindergarten she founded (with the exception of the war, when it was evacuated, and a brief period in the early 1960s when it was temporarily relocated while the city council acquired the building).<sup>93</sup> During this time the

Canongate was slowly cleared of its slums and the many children they housed. With no constituency, therefore, in 1977 the OSP decided Hardy's heart's desire should be closed.

### **Conclusion**

Today all that remains of the SSCG is a plaque to one of Hardy's successors, and it is hard to visualize the working-class community which once thronged the Canongate and inhabited its densely-packed slums. This article has sought to re-imagine that environment and, through its use of largely untapped archival sources, to offer an account of the SSCG's first decade of existence and to place it within the historical impulses that shaped it. It has shown how the Free Kindergarten movement in Britain was not just part of a longer history of educational reform, but equally one of welfare reform and a developing set of strategies to make citizens of the urban poor. It is another arena alongside the contemporary settlement and housing movements which should be included in discussions of the ways in which women had an enormous presence and significant influence within the voluntary sector.

That Hardy, and her contemporaries, understood their work as something that should have influence and impact, be that to admonish the state for inaction, or address social issues in its place (sometimes both), is evident from the closing words of her *Diary*:

...the time will come, at last it will, when the slum-child's right will become every man's duty, when education will be the first and chiefest concern of the people, when the State will provide in slum districts children's homes in a wider, fuller sense than ours, in sufficient numbers to take in all the children. Then it will not be long before

every mother is able herself to give good training to her children, and free kindergartens will be no longer needed, for slums will be no more.<sup>94</sup>

By realizing her own responsibilities as a woman Hardy both expected others to follow her example and that in time her work would be rendered obsolete because government had finally awoken to its responsibilities (hence her careful use of publicity throughout the SSCG's early existence) and, through the construction of new housing, end the need for surrogate homes for slum children.

Certainly, she could claim some success in raising consciousnesses. As already noted, in the wake of the Free Kindergarten for City Children, in which she had played a significant role, and through her independent work at the SSCG, something of a touch paper had been lit in Edinburgh. Three further Free Kindergartens followed (Moray House Nursery School, 1908; The Training College Free Kindergarten, 1912; Hope Cottage Child Garden, 1913) all in proximity to the original two, and founded by women.<sup>95</sup> After the war, a further nine schools were set up in the city, while by 1930 a new programme of slum clearance in the Canongate itself was underway.<sup>96</sup> This was continued after the war and ultimately led, as Hardy predicted, to the closure of her kindergarten.

In the Scottish context it seems particularly important to emphasize that the welfare activity of which Free Kindergartens formed part was largely initiated, theorized and enacted by women. The point matters because for too long accounts of innovation in social and urban reform in Scotland's capital have been associated solely with male protagonists such as Geddes.<sup>97</sup> While his ideas about gender were formative in the doctrine of Spiritual Motherhood, which, as we have seen, provided a rationale for the creation of an area of

women's professional work, he was only one of many people active in welfare work in Edinburgh's Old Town, with much of the work with which he is associated initiated and carried out on the ground by women. Indeed, the philosophy of urban planning that he developed, known as Conservative Surgery, which combined the 'conservation, rehabilitation, and radical reconstruction of existing buildings'<sup>98</sup> could be said to owe not a little to the influence of the Hill sisters and their Scottish counterparts. It was certainly paralleled, as the example of the SSCG demonstrates, in Free Kindergarteners' insistence on working within slum areas, and creating re-forming environments through the transformation of existing buildings; an approach intrinsic to the work of the ESU's Housing Guild.

Such resonances of practice go some way to explaining why Edinburgh was such a fertile ground for the Free Kindergarten movement. In addition, understanding the Old Town, the Royal Mile in particular, as home to a 'feminine public sphere,' comprised of doctors, housing workers, district workers and kindergartners, rather than the sole domain of the heroic Geddes, suggests a site in which middle-class women's presence was unremarkable. We also see how relational and individualist feminists co-existed, although it is worth noting that Hardy does not seem to have engaged with the work of Venters's better-known contemporary, Dr Elsie Inglis, who ran a maternity hospital further up the Royal Mile. This may reflect a tension in beliefs given the latter's commitment to the suffrage movement; it certainly warrants further research.

In the wider Scottish context, that the SSCG was founded under the aegis of an Episcopal church linked it to the tradition of religious organizations assuming responsibility for welfare provision. Likewise the firm emphasis on the building of 'character' through

Kindergarten methods, was a familiar part of contemporary reformist rhetoric. Might also kindergarten's provision of a simulated bucolic environment be understood as a re-working – canny or otherwise – of the Scottish tradition of boarding out? Certainly, a concern to bring the country to the city seems to have been associated particularly with women reformers: a pragmatic response to the need for workers to be near places of employment and in keeping with the desire to transform the existing rather than to disperse people from their homes and communities.

That these Scottish women reformers were for so long overlooked reflects, ironically, the discourse of 'womanliness' that shaped their work. A self-identification as helpmate - the fosterer and nourisher of life - as well as the fact that so much of their work existed in everyday deeds and small transformations to environments, in comparison to the large-scale building activity or vigorous self-promotion (*viz* the massive publicity machine that Geddes built up around himself) of their male contemporaries, has reinforced the idea of the primacy of men's agency in social change, as well as leaving the historian with the slimmest of archival sources from which to restore these women to history. But it is not impossible, and there are many more avenues to be explored in this respect: not just in researching the other kindergartens contemporary with the SSCG and the longer history of the movement in the city, but also in detailed studies of the women who made up Edinburgh's community of Medical Women or conducted the day-to-day work of the Charity Organization Society. Would a comparative survey of Birmingham, another non-metropolitan city in which Free Kindergartens were founded, reveal a similarly close network of women reformers?

Beyond Edinburgh, the Free Kindergarten movement offers an alternative and additional heritage to the more famous (though England-based) Scots associated with innovations in early childhood education, Margaret and Rachel Macmillan. Their work is just pre-dated by that of the Edinburgh women and together they helped to shape the campaign for kindergartens as it developed over the next two decades. The fact that nursery (which became the more widely-used term) education became only a discretionary obligation for local education authorities after 1918 (albeit that was a significant form of progress), saw the founding of a consolidated lobby group to argue the case for more solid and nationwide state support in the form of the Nursery School Association (NSA), founded in 1923 (Hardy was a member). Thus prototypical nursery schools would continue to feature in many of the most radical, and again women-led, social experiments of the inter-war period such as the Pioneer Health Centre (1935) and the housing scheme, Kensal House (1937).<sup>99</sup> While today, when a child-centred early-years education is still understood as the means to social progress, the British Association for Early Childhood Education, the NSA's successor, declares in tones that Hardy would recognize:

Early Education has worked to ensure that early childhood teachers and practitioners have the support to ensure that every child can fulfill their potential. Every child deserves the best possible start in life. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.<sup>100</sup>

### Acknowledgements

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<sup>1</sup> John Hoyland, 'The Basis of Social Experimentation' in *Experiments in Social Reconstruction*, ed. John S. Hoyland (London: Allenson & Co. Ltd, 1937), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, 'Spiritual Motherhood: German Feminists and the Kindergarten Movement, 1846-1911,' *History of Education Quarterly* 22:3 (Autumn 1982), 326.

<sup>3</sup> Von Mareholtz-Bülow cited in *ibid*, 327.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: the culture of young children from the colonial era to the present* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin J. Brehony, 'English Revisionist Froebelians and the Schooling of the Urban Poor' in *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress 1790-1930*, eds Mary Hilton and Pam Hirsch (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 183-200.

<sup>6</sup> Von Marhenholtz-Bülow cited in Allen, 'Spiritual Motherhood,' 331.



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<sup>7</sup> This is a substantial literature, indicative of the texts consulted are Evelyn Lawrence, (ed.), *Friedrich Froebel and English Education* (London: University of London Press, 1952); Nanette Whitbread, *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975) and Michael Steven Shapiro, *Child's Garden, The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> A.M.M.Swanson, *The History of Edinburgh's Early Nursery Schools* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh BAECE, 1975); Roberta Wollons (ed). *Kindergartens and Cultures, The Global Diffusion of an Idea* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), especially Kevin Brehony's essay 'The Kindergarten in England, 1851-1918 (59-86) and *History of Education* 35:2 (March 2006), special issue 'Early Years Education: Some Froebelian Contributions.'

<sup>9</sup> Brehony, 'The Kindergarten in England,' 59.

<sup>10</sup> Marta Gutman, *A City for Children. Women, Architecture and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor. Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 147.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil. Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor, Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914* (London: River Orams Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Orphan Country: children of Scotland's broken homes from 1845 to the present day* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998). Linda Mahood, *Policing Gender, class and*

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*family. Britain, 1850-1940* (London: UCL Press, 1995); Seth Koven, 'Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action, and Child Welfare in Britain, 1840 to 1914' in *Mothers of a New World. Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* eds Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (London: Routledge, 1993), 94-135.

<sup>15</sup> See especially, Brehony, 'English Revisionist Froebelians'.

<sup>16</sup> See Allen, 'Spiritual Motherhood'; idem, 'The kindergarten in Germany and the United States, 1840-1914: A Comparative Perspective,' *History of Education* 35:2 (March 2006), 173-188.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890-1970* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); James C. Albisetti, 'Philanthropy for the middle class: vocational education for girls and young women in mid-Victorian Europe,' *History of Education* 41.3 (2012), 287-301; Susan Brantly *The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag, 1991); Marilyn Scott, 'Laura Marholm (1854-1928): Germany's Ambivalent Feminist,' *Women's Studies* 7 (1980), 87-96.

<sup>18</sup> See Elizabeth Darling and Anne Anderson, 'The Hill Sisters: Cultural Philanthropy and the Embellishment of Lives' in *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950* eds Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 33-50.

<sup>19</sup> Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach,' *Signs* 14:1 (Autumn 1988), 136.

<sup>20</sup> See Megan K Smitley, *Feminine Public Sphere: middle class women in civic life in Scotland, ca 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009) and Esther

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Breitenbach, Linda Fleming, S.Karly Kehoe and Lesley Orr (eds), *Scottish Women, A Documentary History, 1780-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Mahood, *Policing gender*, 70.

<sup>22</sup> Smitley, *Feminine Public Sphere*, 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> See especially Walter Stephen (ed.), *Learning from the Lassies. Women of the Patrick Geddes Circle*. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Ltd, 2014) and for an overview of women's approach to urban space, see the Introduction of Darling and Whitworth, *Women and the Making of Built Space in England*.

<sup>24</sup> Brehony cited in Kristen Nawrotzki. "'Greatly Changed for the Better,' Free Kindergartens as Transatlantic Reformance,' *History of Education Quarterly* 49:2 (2009), 183.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac Cowie. *Edinburgh Red Book of Charities and Institutions with classified and alphabetical indices* (Edinburgh: Charity Organisation Society, 1914), 42-43.

<sup>26</sup> Abrams, *Orphan Country*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> Lileen Hardy, *Diary of a Free Kindergarten* (London, Gay and Hancock, 1912); an American edition followed in 1913, published by Houghton, Mifflin and Company (from which citations here are taken).

<sup>29</sup> Nawrotzki. "'Greatly Changed for the Better,'" 182-195.

<sup>30</sup> Copies are in the Edinburgh Room of Edinburgh Central Library.

<sup>31</sup> Nawrotzki, "'Greatly Changed for the Better,'" 185-186.

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<sup>32</sup> Beatty, *Preschool Education*, 50-51, notes how this internationalization was rooted in the fact that Froebel's ideas were identified with liberal politics in Germany, becoming particularly contentious in the wake of the failure of the 1848 revolution. Thus a 'diaspora' of liberal free thinkers from Germany proceeded to establish kindergartens as far afield as the US, Russia, Japan and England.

<sup>33</sup> Census records for 1881 and for 1901; register of births for spring 1872.

<sup>34</sup> Allen, 'Spiritual Motherhood,' 327; Brehony, 'English Revisionist Froebelians, 183.

<sup>35</sup> Darling and Whitworth, *Women and the Making of Built Space in England*, 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Beatty, *Preschool Education*, 50-51.

<sup>37</sup> Mrs Hirst Alexander, 'The Sesame Club in London,' *The Strand Magazine* (September 1901), 1.

<sup>38</sup> 'Sesame Club Notes,' *Child Life* 1 (1899), 53-55.

<sup>39</sup> On Buckton see Tracy Cutting, *Beneath the Silent Tor. The Life and Work of Alice Buckton 1867-1944* (Wells: St Andrews Press, 2004) and Stephanie Mathivet, 'Alice Buckton (1867-1944): The Legacy of a Froebelian in the Landscape of Glastonbury' *History of Education* 35:2 (March 2006), 263-281. By 1901, Alexander (see note above, 2) described her as 'a trained educator of high aims, and lately science lecturer and examiner for the Froebel Society and at the Froebel Institute.'

<sup>40</sup> Alice Buckton, 'Sesame Child Garden and House for home training,' *Child Life* 1 (1899), 32-36. All quotations are taken from here until signalled otherwise.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander. 'The Sesame Club,' 3.

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<sup>42</sup> ‘The Eleventh Year Record of Sesame House, July 1910,’ lists fees of eight guineas a term, with board and residence an additional 13 guineas, British Association for Early Childhood Education (BAECE) Archive, London School of Economics, 13/3.

<sup>43</sup> Sesame House Leaflet, no.7 (n.d.), 20, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Alexander. ‘The Sesame Club,’ 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Diary*, 33-34.

<sup>47</sup> This quotation is taken from the manuscript (held privately) on which the published *Diary* was based, cited here as DoFK MS, July 1908 (not paginated).

<sup>48</sup> ‘Report of the First Year’s Work at Sesame House,’ *Child Life*, 2 (1900), 253. This records its graduates as founding kindergartens in Riga, Helsinki and Paris.

<sup>49</sup> Listed in ‘The Eleventh Year Record of Sesame House’.

<sup>50</sup> Veronica Burbridge, ‘Sympathy, Synthesis and Synergy. Patrick Geddes and the Edinburgh Social Union’ in *Learning from the Lassies*, 73-93, and *Scottish Women a Documentary History*, 213-217. See also her son’s memoir Lancelot Law Whyte, *Focus and Diversions* (London: The Cresset Press, 1963).

<sup>51</sup> Oliphant was head of the Charlotte Square Institution for the Education of Girls; his lecture ‘The Education of Girls’ was published in 1889.

<sup>52</sup> Helen Meller, ‘Gender, Citizenship and the Making of the Modern Environment,’ in *Women and the Making of Built Space*, 13-32. Burbridge, *ibid.*, also references Geddes’s ideas on gender.

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<sup>53</sup> ESU *Annual Report*, 1904.

<sup>54</sup> On this visit see Jim Johnson and Lou Rosenburg, *Renewing Old Edinburgh, the Enduring Legacy of Patrick Geddes* (Edinburgh: Argyll Publishing, 2010), 64-68.

<sup>55</sup> See R.J.Morris, 'White Horse Close: Philanthropy, Scottish Historical Imagination and the Rebuilding of Edinburgh in the later Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 33.1 (2013), 101-128.

<sup>56</sup> Burbridge, 'Sympathy, Synthesis and Synergy,' *passim* (property figures on 870).

<sup>57</sup> On OSP and the Edinburgh Episcopal church see Gavin White, *The Scottish Episcopal Church, a New History* (Edinburgh: General Synod of the Episcopal Church, 1998), esp. 33-40. I have also drawn from the *OSP Church Monthly Magazine* (copies held privately) to build up a picture of its welfare work. The fact that OSP's congregation at this date largely comprised wealthy lawyers and other professionals resident in the New Town, meant it was relatively well-funded. The church also benefited from grants from the Walker Trust, an Episcopalian charity that supported missionary work in the Old Town.

<sup>58</sup> *OSP Church Monthly Magazine*, January 1903. In 1906 it moved to a former envelope factory at Dunbar's Close.

<sup>59</sup> *OSP Church Monthly Magazine* October, 1907.

<sup>60</sup> John R. Roxburgh, *The Edinburgh Philanthropic Red Book, A Handbook to the various Institutions and Trades available for the benefit and relief of persons in Edinburgh and Leith who are suffering distress* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, 1901).

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<sup>61</sup> Anon, 'Free Kindergartens,' *Child Life* 3 (1903), 85. The anonymous author is slightly stretching the point: the English Education Act (1870) made School Boards responsible for educating children between the age of three and 13; in London, bye-laws made attendance compulsory between the age of five and ten. As Davin argues, in reality children often attended from the age of three: Davin, *Growing up Poor*, 91-95.

<sup>62</sup> The first Free Kindergarten proper was founded at Woolwich, south London, by Adelaide Wragge in 1900, under the auspices of the Women's University Settlement.

<sup>63</sup> Anon, 'Free Kindergartens in Great Britain' *Child Life*, 5 (1905), 94-100 (Hardy's account is on 95-96) and *Free Kindergarten for City Children Annual Report* 1906 held in Patrick Geddes Archive (PGA), University of Strathclyde Archives, T-Ged/12/2/18. Very little material survives about this kindergarten. Swanson, *The History of Edinburgh's Early Nursery Schools*, 11, cites a Daybook written by its first head, Alice Waterston, but the author could find no trace of this.

<sup>64</sup> 'Letter from the Rector', *OSP Church Monthly Magazine* (July 1906), 3-5.

<sup>65</sup> Anon, 'A Day at the Edinburgh Free Kindergarten' *Child Life* 9 (1907), 73.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence Wilson. *Laurie of Old St Paul's, A Memoir*. (Edinburgh: R. Grant & Sons Ltd, 1940), 90.

<sup>67</sup> DoFK MS, July 1908.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, April 1907.

<sup>69</sup> Correspondence between Hardy and Geddes, PGA, T-Ged 9/727-30, October-November 1906.

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<sup>70</sup> DoFK MS, November 1906.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, April 1907.

<sup>72</sup> *Diary*, 123.

<sup>73</sup> *SSCG Annual Report*, 1909-10, 6 and list of staff (unpaginated).

<sup>74</sup> This was a Prince Galitzene, mentioned as a visitor to Charlotte Square in Whyte, *Focus and Diversions*, 11.

<sup>75</sup> James Kinghorn, 'Isabel Venters,' *Bruntsfield Hospital Magazine* (March 1972), 12. See also *The Scotsman*, 13 October, 1934, 16. More generally see Mary-Ann Elston, 'Run by women (mainly) for women': Medical Women's Hospitals in Britain, 1866-1948,' in *Women and Modern Medicine* eds Anne Hardy and Lawrence Conrad (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 73-108.

<sup>76</sup> DoFK MS entries for April 1907 and November 1906.

<sup>77</sup> *Diary*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Census return, Midcommon Close, Canongate, 1901; personal knowledge. The death was certified by Dr Venters.

<sup>79</sup> DoFK MS, Easter 1908.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, July 1908.

<sup>81</sup> *Diary*, 114.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>84</sup> DoFK MS, June 1908.



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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, March 1907.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, November 1908. The transliterations are Hardy's.

<sup>87</sup> SSCG *Annual Report*, 1909-1910, 4.

<sup>88</sup> SSCG *Annual Report*, 1910-11, report by Agnes Patterson, 27 November 1911.

<sup>89</sup> DoFK MS, July 1908.

<sup>90</sup> Preface to DoFK MS.

<sup>91</sup> SSCG *Annual Report*, 1909-1910, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Minutes of the Diocesan Council and Education Board of the Edinburgh Diocese, 29 May 1913-23 January 1914, National Archives of Scotland, CH12/86/3. This reflects the fact that, as these minutes note, OSP was well endowed. In 1909-10, the SSCG's income was just over £200 (and expenditure the same), figures from the SSCG *Annual Report*, 1909-1910.

<sup>93</sup> Edinburgh City Archives, OSP archive, poster history of the SSCG, Acc. 674, undated.

<sup>94</sup> Hardy, *Diary*, 173.

<sup>95</sup> See Swanson, *The History of Edinburgh's Early Nursery Schools*, 9-41.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 42-75, and Robert Hurd, 'Clearing the Slums of Edinburgh,' *Architects' Journal* (26 March 1930), 491-4 and (2 April 1930), 542-5.

<sup>97</sup> The literature on Geddes is enormous, among the best recent scholarship see Helen Meller, *Patrick Geddes, Social Evolutionist and Urban Planner* (London: Routledge, 1990) and Johnson and Rosenberg, *Renewing Old Edinburgh*. The other male protagonist usually invoked in discussions of Edinburgh urban reform is its Medical Officer of Health,

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H.D.Littlejohn, on whom see Paul Laxton and Richard Rodger, *Insanitary City. Henry Littlejohn and the Condition of Edinburgh* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2013).

<sup>98</sup> Johnson and Rosenberg, *Renewing Old Edinburgh*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> On which see Elizabeth Darling, *Re-forming Britain, Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), Chapters Two and Five.

<sup>100</sup> The BAECE, 'Our History' <https://www.early-education.org.uk/our-history>, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2016.