

**HELEN VICTORIA SMITH,  
ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY (1858-1951): RELIGION, MATERNALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM IN  
BIRMINGHAM, 1888-1914**

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The first section of this thesis examines the important Bournville and Birmingham-based social reform work of Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury, the second wife of confectioner and social reformer George Cadbury (1839-1922). The subject is especially pertinent for Woodbrooke, as the Quaker couple lived there (1888-94), before the 1903 opening of the Quaker Settlement. The second part of the thesis – an extensive extract from a revised interpretive catalogue of Taylor Cadbury’s personal archives, produced as an integral part of the Ph.D. – has directly informed the first.

Taylor Cadbury was deeply involved in housing reform, educational administration and welfare policy-making in association with Bournville, King’s Norton and Northfield Local Education Authority, and Birmingham City and Worcester County Councils. Her work at Bournville promoted the ideas about public health and town planning associated with the Garden City Movement. Her experience of school management enabled her to develop skills which could be used in the service of Worcester and Birmingham’s Education Committees and in successfully developing the City’s pioneering school medical services. Each of these areas nuances the dominant narrative of women’s exclusion from planning, financial and policy-based activities in the public sphere. Yet Taylor Cadbury was conservative, wishing women’s involvement in reform, not necessarily to further political power and suffrage, but to ensure that the maternalist qualities they possessed would improve society and citizenship. For Taylor Cadbury, her primary motivation was Quaker service.

**Keywords:** faith in action; Christian citizenship; Bournville; Birmingham; public sphere; municipal reform; elected council; women; maternalism; National Union of Women Workers; urban housing; education; school medical service, Cadbury;

**Useful for:** those exploring Quaker service; archivists and archive studies; historians using biography and those of education and medicine; those interested in the background of Woodbrooke; Bournville and the Garden City Movement; notions of citizenship and the role of women in the public sphere; the local outcome of or influence in political and Liberal reforms

A copy of the full thesis can be downloaded at

<http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3296/1/Smith12PhD.pdf>

## CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

**Overview:** This section forms the backdrop to the thesis, outlining the central themes, rationale and relation with wider scholarship, the sources, methodology and structure of the work, and a more detailed biography of Taylor Cadbury. The author explains that ‘Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury is variously identified as Elsie Taylor, Elsie M. Cadbury, Elizabeth Mary Cadbury, Mrs. George Cadbury and Dame Elizabeth Cadbury in documents contained within her personal archive. Reflecting the usage of both maiden and married names among the Taylor and Cadbury Quaker kinship network, she has been identified consistently throughout the thesis as Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury, abbreviated as Taylor Cadbury.’

**Rationale:** The thesis is unusual, being shaped by two distinct strands of endeavour: the writing of a history of Taylor Cadbury and her social welfare work; and the production of a revised (and useable) interpretive catalogue of Taylor Cadbury’s personal archive for Birmingham Archives and Heritage Service. The author therefore reflects on the advantages and challenges of using personal papers within what is generally termed as the recent “‘biographical turn” in the humanities’ – in particular the ability to excavate how faith informed action, but also the inherent self-consciousness and generation of myth – and the role of archivists, including herself, in interpreting and organising deposited collections. The combination of the two strands of endeavour has led the author to connect with a wide range of scholarship. The most prominent is historical work on maternal ‘religious activism’ and ‘social mothering’ in the long nineteenth century. The author argues against the simple reading that women used their religious conviction to gain access to public life, local politics and enfranchisement, though acknowledges that Taylor Cadbury’s Quaker kinship network (and the Cadbury name) opened doors. In response to the studies of Quaker women by Phyllis Mack, and Annemieke Van Drenth and Francisca de Haan, the thesis seeks to identify ‘how Taylor Cadbury envisaged and promoted maternal work supporting social reform as an obligation of Christian citizenship and an expression of service to God’.

**Sources:** A substantial part of Chapter One is given over to describing the rich array of sources used in the thesis, against which the information drawn from the personal papers of Taylor Cadbury is contextualised. These include Cadbury correspondence in the University of Birmingham’s Letters Additional Collection, and the minutes, reports, log books and press-cuttings of numerous bodies with which Taylor Cadbury came into contact: the Bournville Village Trust, Schools Management Committee

and Infant School; the King's Norton and Northfield, Birmingham and Worcester County Council Education Committees; and the Birmingham South-Eastern District School Manager, the Hygiene Sub-Committee, and Dental Hospital.

## **CHAPTER TWO. ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY AND BOURNVILLE VILLAGE: WOMEN AND 'THE IDEAS OF GARDEN VILLAGES'**

**Overview:** This chapter explores Taylor Cadbury's role in shaping Bournville, the villagers' healthy lifestyle and even that of its visitors. It is argued that her efforts here, disseminated through the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW), suggest that women's position in the Garden City Movement (GCM) has been underestimated. Furthermore, the author asserts, Taylor Cadbury framed her maternalist housing reform – shaped by environmental concern, rather than elitism – as religiously-motivated social service and not political drive.

**Bournville's Development:** Richard Cadbury (1835-1899) and his brother, Elizabeth's husband, George (1839-1922) moved the Cadbury Factory from central to suburban Birmingham in the late 1870s, creating the marketing connection between their chocolate and healthfulness. Named Bournville, the large site enabled rapid expansion; yet this was carefully considered, reflecting George's personal concern with poor urban housing amidst wider discussions centred on working-class health. Emerging in the late-1800s, the GCM strove to eliminate overcrowded, insanitary and unhealthy living conditions through town planning. At Bournville, housing construction began in 1895. Bournville Village Trust (BVT) was established in 1900, with Taylor Cadbury as its sole female member.

**Taylor Cadbury's Social Reform:** Historians have often ignored Taylor Cadbury's contribution to the development and promotion of Bournville as a response to industrial urbanisation, usually seeing her welcome visits to new tenants as akin to, in historian Ellen Ross' words, 'satirical "lady bountiful" stereotypes', or else as echoing surveillance culture at London housing schemes operated by middle-class philanthropist Octavia Hill; yet Taylor Cadbury also visited new mothers, the ill and bereaved, and those with domestic difficulties. Certainly, in her twenties she had thought poverty was caused by 'want of thrift' and publicly advocated 'making the poor more like their betters'. But volunteering in an impoverished area of Paris in 1885 and subsequent home-visiting in East-End London changed her

attitude. From the 1890s, Taylor Cadbury considered housing reform as the main solution for poverty and later linked slum visits with 'her 'immense interest' in Bournville's 'garden village.

**Taylor Cadbury and the Garden City Movement:** Taylor Cadbury was actively involved in many aspects of Bournville's social welfare and design (including furnishing a 'show cottage'). She was pivotal in disseminating Bournville's value in terms of public health, especially for children; considered a natural province for female public life. As well as founding the Birmingham Union of Girls' Club (1898), at Bournville she introduced outdoor exercise for local women and children, something akin to a city farm and, in 1908, The Beeches, a children's holiday home. Her emphasis on sunshine, fresh air and green space as a means to combat 'the Physical Deterioration of the Working Classes' echoed that of the Garden City Movement. Thus, Taylor Cadbury advocated such planning schemes as 'the solution to social issues which scholarship suggests drew women's attention away from the GCM'. Through her personal papers it is apparent that other female philanthropists she knew – especially through National Union of Women Workers conferences, where she spoke often – were capable of multi-tasking, with interests in housing reform and suffrage. Correspondence with Dame Henrietta Barnett (1851-1936), founder of Hampstead Garden Suburb, exemplifies the influence of her environmental approach to housing reform.

Even so, for Taylor Cadbury motivation was often as important as reform efforts. She emphasised 'the obligations of Christian citizenship' in philanthropy and placed the continuation of slums within the unjust social milieu of a society that had lost its 'Christian conscience'. Despite their gendered roles at Bournville, this was a sentiment echoed in the 'religious dimension' associated with her husband's establishment of Bournville. This had first manifested in the couple's promotion of the Adult School Movement, a matter that reflected their Quaker heritage and their belief that Quaker faithfulness was expressed through 'practical activity in this world'.

### **CHAPTER THREE. ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY AND THE BOURNVILLE VILLAGE SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Overview**

This chapter focuses on Taylor Cadbury's role in Bournville's school development, 1904-10, and continues to privilege active Christian citizenship in her motivation (see especially pp. 148-63). The

author argues that her work here and with the Parents' National Education Union (PNEU), University of Birmingham (UoB) and Worcestershire and Birmingham local authorities can reorient wider scholarship. This has tended to argue that women were sidelined into gendered educational activities away from financial and school-building decisions, a matter exacerbated by the 1902 Education Act, which abolished school boards to which women could be elected.

### **Bournville Schools**

Anticipated in 1901 and funded by the Cadbury couple, Bournville's infant and elementary schools were to be established on the footing of 'voluntary schools'. Taylor Cadbury chaired the Schools Management Committee from its 1904 inception, guiding the establishment of Ruskin Hall's temporary school for girls and infants through the Local Education Authority (LEA). In 1906, the purpose-built girls' Bournville Elementary School opened; the infant department then filled the Hall, before receiving a permanent site in 1910. However, King's Norton and Northfield (KNN) LEA, held jurisdiction over Bournville's schools, leading to tensions surrounding class size and staffing, and Bournville Village Trust's policy of privileging Bournville children for Bournville schools.

### **Taylor Cadbury and Children's Education**

Women were elected to school boards after the 1870 Education Act. Scholars often argue that they were marginalised, or else hamstrung by deference to local authorities; matters deteriorated in 1902, despite the concession won by Women's Local Government Society for female co-option to the new LEAs. However, the author argues that Taylor Cadbury's involvement in BVT schools has been drastically underestimated, which has implications for our understanding of women's participation in educational administration.

With her 1888 move to Birmingham, Taylor Cadbury became involved in Mothers in Council and oversaw its 1901/2 merger with the Parents' National Education Union; both groups shared a gendered approach to education. Yet at the Bournville Village Trust, Taylor Cadbury became involved in policy, helping to introduce a domestic curriculum, and inspected teaching applicants for the Schools Management Committee. She even overruled the Birmingham school inspector in the choice of elementary-school head-teacher in 1905, seemingly 'pushing the boundaries of 'organizational policy-making' within the limits of conformity to the' LEA. The author suggests that her negotiations of policy with the LEA during these incidents demonstrate Taylor Cadbury's skills for educational management. She also exerted pressure on the LEA for additional staff and, through BVT's liaison with educationalist

Sir Michael Sadler (1861-1943) and the Secretary of the Board of Education in Whitehall, forced the authority to rethink their plan to increase class sizes. She also stepped in to enforce the full attendance of pupils, taking her role beyond mere LEA adherence. Contributing to her success were the Cadbury name, social network, her capacity to negotiate educational policy and effective promotion of ideas.

### **Taylor Cadbury and Wider Education**

In 1900, Taylor Cadbury was elected to the University of Birmingham's Board of Governors. Reflecting the dominant gendered attitude of the University, her interest and responsibility lay with women students and staff. Concern rotated around the 1902 appointment of a lady tutor, essentially to provide pastoral care for female students, and 1907 efforts to establish a hostel for women students.

In 1903, Taylor Cadbury was co-opted to Worcestershire County Council with Eliza Mary Sturge (the first elected female on the Birmingham School Board and niece of Quaker social activists). Taylor Cadbury's work on the Organization Sub-Committee included financial and school-building decisions, contradicting the historiography surrounding gendered policy roles. Her co-option to Birmingham's Education Committee, 1911-9, saw her assess the implementation of H. M. Inspectorate's recommendations at three local schools. Her recommendation that one should receive a piano prompted a wider campaign to introduce instruments to all South-East Birmingham schools. Influenced by her beliefs in fresh air, 'health and effective education' and Uffculme's open air school (another Cadbury family project), she also helped prevent one school losing outdoor space.

Taylor Cadbury was considered an educationalist. She saw women's involvement in education as imperative, not primarily for political gain, but from social service and spiritual calling. Whilst the historiography has emphasised female protest after the 1902 Act, unlike many Birmingham Nonconformists Taylor Cadbury was more positive, prioritising 'efficient education'. However, and whilst her status ensured inclusion, she worried that women's religious duty and 'chances of service' in maternalist social causes were diminishing. Social service was part of the rationale for her reluctant 1919 decisions to stand for King's Norton Councillor and Liberal MP. Nevertheless, inspired by her teacher Frances Mary Buss (1827-94), she connected education and the production of good and spiritual citizens, which she felt was impeded by overcrowded classrooms and understaffing, the matters she had fought against at Bournville.

## **CHAPTER FOUR. ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIRMINGHAM'S SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE**

### **Overview**

Continuing to argue that Taylor Cadbury's work was informed by religious (and maternal) social service and not necessarily political empowerment, this chapter explores her Chairmanship of the Hygiene Sub-Committee (HSC) of Birmingham Education Committee (BEC) between 1911 and her 1924 retirement. Building on her experience, Taylor Cadbury exerted authority in guiding school medical welfare services through local negotiations and mediated with the Board of Education (BoE). Aside from (partly successful) campaigning for free school medical treatment, she oversaw the improvement of dentition and the establishment of school clinics.

### **Birmingham Hygiene Sub-Committee**

Emerging from the Liberal government's welfare reforms for public and child health and the Board of Education's recognition that prevention was preferable to cure, Local Education Authorities were sanctioned to monitor and intervene in eye, ear, nose, throat and dental 'defects'. Birmingham Education Committee established its School Medical Department in 1908, which instituted the Hygiene Sub-committee (1911). Matters were set against a legislative backdrop concerned with funding such services, with Acts (1909, 1912 and 1912) introduced to mitigate shortfall problems and financial pressures on local authorities.

### **Taylor Cadbury and Health Politics**

Surprised to find herself as Hygiene Sub-committee Chairman, Taylor Cadbury's connections with local medical authorities and the Board of Education (including Quakers) would see her professional influence result in a range of schemes and the foundation of eight clinics, including a central hub, which she called 'my special School Clinic Scheme'. The author acknowledges that participation was part of a much longer lineage of female involvement in the 'mixed economy of welfare'. Some scholars have argued that this diminished with the shift in power from local to central government, which the author considers to run contrary to the dependence of Westminster on local agencies to enact policy, something which gave women some autonomy, as is evidenced by Birmingham. Here Taylor Cadbury was a contemporary of Ellen Pinsent, an elected City Councillor and Chairman of the Special Schools Sub-Committee.



Pinsent's sway was significant and stemmed Taylor Cadbury's campaign to introduce free aspects of child healthcare – objectors cited expense and the possibility of creating dependence– until her 1913 departure from Birmingham. The association of both women with finance committees contradicts wider scholarship on the exclusion of women. Whilst Board of Education policies also stalled Hygiene Sub-committee dental schemes, the focus on teeth continued earlier efforts by Birmingham Dental Hospital (BDH). However, Taylor Cadbury had some connection to dentition through personal health experience and the Cadbury brothers' scheme to promote oral health for local children in an attempt to mitigate negative publicity.

### **Taylor Cadbury and Medical Provision**

Cadbury donations to the dental hospital may also have helped Taylor Cadbury negotiate the extensive use of its facilities for school dental treatment, though the hospital also wanted to improve oral health. Under Taylor Cadbury's direction, the HSC widened child participation in dental schemes. As such, she led the local implementation of state educational welfare provision. Her efforts to negotiate free school healthcare would eventually see some objectors change their opinion, resulting in a compromise: higher rates for dental care, a flat fee for tonsil and adenoid surgery, and free treatment for virtually everything else. Whilst reflecting national expansion, Taylor Cadbury's persuasiveness in establishing eight clinics would assist Birmingham's image as an exemplar of care.

The results achieved suggest that women could have 'agency in municipal policy'. Taylor Cadbury is noted to have occupied the 'political space' between the City Council and the Board of Education. Even so, she – and many male colleagues – continued to believe that maternal expertise could and should be exerted in health and welfare as a social service of Christian citizenship. Whilst introducing talks on domestic motherhood for women waiting in the clinics might be read as elitist, she considered a good upbringing essential to produce good citizens. Her approach made a real difference, including the introduction of distracting toys for children awaiting medical appointments and twenty-four-hour observation after children's surgery. The belief also opened doors for the 'maternal empathy' of female medical practitioners, especially dentists, in school medical work; Taylor Cadbury even attended a meeting at the Board of Education with a National Union of Women Workers colleague to promote the policy.

## **CONCLUSION**

The author provides an overview of the thesis and her arguments, highlighting how the work can inform current thinking. However, she also introduces valuable clarifying sections.

### **Taylor Cadbury, Suffrage and Feminism**

Here Taylor Cadbury is compared with other prominent women – namely anti-suffragist Mary Ward (1851-1920) and National Union of Women Workers' member, Louise Creighton (1850-1936) – where she is both placed more firmly within active supporters of suffrage and as part of a more conservative approach that emphasised gendered service through maternalism.

### **Taylor Cadbury, Religious Faithfulness and Quakerism**

In her own words, Taylor Cadbury considered Quaker agency and identity to have fostered 'the right & capacity of women for social work' and to have given them 'a dignified position & opportunities for service'. Whilst faith – or the appearance of Christianity to bolster individual secular demands – was often a motivation in the lineage of women's social reform work, for Taylor Cadbury Quaker service was a more profound call from God towards the selfless devotion to collective betterment.

### **Social Motherhood**

It is suggested that future research might better understand women's motivations for involvement in social reform or welfarism if faith is considered alongside politics, nuancing readings of middle-class elitism. The author alludes to academic work which has viewed the links between Quaker women's spiritual equality and political equality as ambivalent, concluding that Taylor Cadbury and other female Friends separated suffrage from the spiritual. Indeed, although rooted in a gendered approach, Taylor Cadbury considered her faith in action as part of a heritage of Quaker protest and social care. Whilst this reflected wider contemporaneous trends in how the faith was being reshaped and rejuvenated, the preservation of her personal papers enabled the construction of a physical Quaker legacy; something that could have implications for Quaker archives elsewhere.

## **CATALOGUE EXTRACT**

### **Overview**

This section of the thesis represents the author's collaborative work with Birmingham Archives and Heritage Service to create a more useable, interpretive catalogue of Taylor Cadbury's personal papers. The author briefly describes how she has divided the catalogue and provides examples of her methodology and rationale, in particular alluding to how particular papers were previously organised and how she refined the entries. An extract from the catalogue is included, which helps illustrate how the author went about her task and also assists the reader of the thesis in understanding how the papers have informed the doctoral thesis.

**Summary prepared by Rebecca Wynter, 2012**