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MARY DAWSON and NEWTON PARK TRAINING COLLEGE:
EDUCATION, TEACHER TRAINING, and EXPRESSIONS OF CITIZENSHIP
IN THE LONG 1950s

KATHRYN ELIZABETH JAMES

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This research reflects and builds upon my own perspective as a mature student. I was born in the early 1960s, and throughout my childhood knew women who clearly had agency of their own in their lives and work, within family businesses, the teaching profession, or through self-employment.

The discovery of previously unseen archive documents and oral history interviews through my work with the Bath Spa University Archive presented the opportunity to research real lives and to uncover the nuanced detail of women's experience in the long 1950s.

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Abstract

Following the Second World War, revolutionary changes to national education resulted in a huge demand for teachers. It was women who stepped into this void, taking advantage of a profession which combined present opportunity and future flexibility.

This thesis provides a case study of one establishment which trained such teachers. Newton Park Training College was founded in 1946, under the leadership of Mary Dawson, who served as Principal until her retirement in 1968. Dawson, as a university-educated woman herself, is part of a significant network of women who led the training colleges over this period, and she used the rhetoric and ethos of citizenship to validate the development of women's participation throughout the teaching profession. This study argues that, as part of a widely expanding educational sector in an era of post-war reconstruction, women teachers were integral to public life and were able to demonstrate their personal agency and conduct their own lives in ways not possible for previous generations. This led to a new confidence for many women, who in turn served as conduits for change for those who followed.

The period of the long 1950s presented women with a number of contrasting choices, of which the media image of the 'lipsticked and aproned' woman at home remains dominant.¹ Such imagery presents much of the period as offering limited opportunity to women, yet this assumption is belied by the increasing visibility of married women engaged in public life, and the expectation of the women themselves that their contributions as active and responsible citizens were vital to national life.

The thesis focuses on just one woman, one college, and a small group of students. But in doing so it unpacks the changing nature of a period of history in which women were able to exploit a public life through teaching. It adds to the knowledge of women teachers in the period and makes an original contribution through the in-depth analysis of one institution and its leader, and makes further contributions to scholarship in several areas. Specifically, these feature country house history in the post-war period, biographical and institutional history, and the

¹ Selina Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class*, (London, John Murray, 2014) p. 211.

contribution made by women like Dawson and her students through education in the twentieth century.

The story of Newton Park College provides an assessment of the longer-term impact of women's education and forces a reconsideration of the significance of this era. It also reinforces and complements recent scholarship which establishes the long 1950s as part of the continuity of progress towards women's equality over the course of the twentieth century.



Mary Dawson, circa 1945. Photographer unknown. (Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive)

List of Abbreviations

ATCDE	Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
LEA	Local Education Authority
TCA	Training Colleges Association
TES	Times Educational Supplement

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Introduction

In 2012, in the first few months of the Bath Spa University Archive Project, I was granted permission to access the basement strong room of Main House at Newton Park.¹ Main House now provides office accommodation for the University's senior staff, including the Vice Chancellor and the executive team. I had been told that a portrait of Mary Dawson, which used to hang for many years in the stairwell of the house itself, might be found there. Behind a heavy iron door, the small stone room with flagstone floor is an original part of the eighteenth-century house, and there on the floor I found the portrait. Following this, the portrait was rehung in Main House, and a new generation of staff and students became aware of Dawson, after an absence of many years.

This thesis examines the founding of Newton Park Teacher Training College and the leadership of Mary Dawson, who served as Principal from 1946 until her retirement in 1968.² Its central question considers how the ethos and development of the College under Dawson, reflected ideas of citizenship and women's agency in the post-war world.

Founded as a college for women, Newton Park was established as part of the changes in education which followed the 1944 Education Act, to address the acute shortage of teachers – a shortage initially created by the conditions of war, then seriously worsened by the demands of the act. Led by Mary Dawson, the College offered training to women at a time when their contribution to the teaching profession was in high demand. Dawson herself described the Act as 'revolutionary', in the opportunities it created for women, for children, for the teacher training colleges, and for education as a whole. Dawson and the students she trained stand as examples of educated women in the twentieth century, and the ways those women expressed their agency. They used the opportunities provided by education, and the rhetoric of citizenship to embrace 'full and

¹ The Archive Project, initially known as the Newton Park Project, was established by the History department in 2011, to look into a small collection of primary sources held in the Estates office at the Newton Park Campus. The Project carried out oral history interviews with alumni, and gathered further primary source documents from across the university as they emerged.

² In terms of the college itself, several name changes have occurred throughout its history. Originally set up by the local authority, it was named the City of Bath Training College, but quickly became known as Newton Park College, after its location. A few years after Dawson retired it amalgamated with other Bath institutions to become Bath College of Higher Education, later becoming Bath Spa University College, and in 2005 Bath Spa University. I refer to 'Newton Park College' throughout.

abundant lives' in a way not possible for previous generations.³ The College community, based at Newton Park, became the backdrop for their endeavours and entrance to public life.

Through investigation of aspects of twentieth century education, the site at Newton Park, and Mary Dawson herself, the thesis makes valuable contributions to scholarship in several areas; specifically, country house history in the post-war period; biographical and institutional history, and the contribution made by women such as Dawson and her students in and through education in the twentieth century. Elements of country house history explain the availability of the Newton Park estate in the mid-1940s, as a place from which new versions of citizenship could be practised. The biographical examination of Dawson uncovers her life and experience, providing an 'interconnection between personal stories and historical pasts.'⁴ It shows that she was representative of a larger group of women in educational leadership roles, who were able to use their positions to enable other women. The thesis is also, in part, an institutional history, offering a view of one college through which to explore wider patterns of society in the long 1950s. Newton Park College, under Mary Dawson's leadership, had an outlook of expansion and development, and in many ways these ideas lead directly to the institution which exists today. In other ways, Dawson's contribution has been forgotten, as have other women like her. During their lives and careers, educationalists in Dawson's mould dominated the leadership of the women's colleges and girl's schools, and represented an important and highly qualified elite. By examining the origins of the institution in its first three decades, the thesis will highlight aspects of women's colleges, and the reasons why their wider contribution to higher education appears to have been overlooked. Finally, as an example of women's history the thesis seeks to explore the female experience and analyse the evolution of women's roles in British post-war society. Newton Park College is used as a case study from which to investigate and illuminate the lives and actions of a specific group of women in the long 1950s, and the ways their agency was encouraged and expressed. The period following the Second World War presented women with a number of contrasting choices, and yet the media image of the 'lipsticked and aproned' woman at home remains dominant.⁵ Such

³ This phrase was used by Dawson in numerous documents and speeches.

⁴ Jane Martin, 'Interpreting biography in the History of Education: Past and Present', *History of Education*, 41.1 (2012) 87-102, p.87.

⁵ Todd, *The People*, p. 211.

imagery presents much of the period as offering limited opportunity to women, yet this assumption is belied by the increasing visibility of married women engaged in public life, and the expectation of the women themselves that their contributions as active and responsible citizens were vital to national life. The roles and responsibilities of the individual citizen were much emphasised in the period of reconstruction following the Second World War, at home and abroad, which saw many nations attempting to rebuild in the wake of hostilities.

The thesis uncovers the ways in which Mary Dawson and her students used the rhetoric of citizenship in the development of women's participation in the teaching profession, and the circumstances in which those women demonstrated their personal agency in their own lives and careers. It argues that, as part of a widely expanding educational sector in an era of post-war reconstruction, women teachers became integral to public life and were able to conduct their own lives in ways not possible for previous generations. Their participation led to a new confidence for many women, and these women in turn served as a conduit for change for those who followed. The thesis reinforces and complements recent scholarship which establishes the long 1950s as part of the continuity of progress towards women's equality over the course of the twentieth century; scholarship which presents women's diversity of experience through the examination of specific groups and networks.⁶ It specifically adds to the knowledge of women teachers in the period, and makes an original contribution through the in-depth analysis of one woman, the institution she founded, and the students she taught. The story of Newton Park College provides an assessment of the longer-term impact of women's education, and forces a reconsideration of the significance of

⁶ Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives & Citizens: Domesticity & the Women's Movement in England 1928-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Caitriona Beaumont, 'What Do Women Want? Housewives Associations, Activism and Changing Representations of Women in the 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 147-162. Carol Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble: Panic & Progress in the History of Young Women* (London: Zed Books, 2013). Carol Dyhouse, 'Was there ever a time when girls weren't in trouble? *Women's History Review*, 23.2 (2014) 272-274. Sian Edwards, 'Nothing gets her goat!' The Farmer's Wife and the duality of Rural Femininity in the Young Farmer's Club Movement in 1950s Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 26-45. Alice Ferrebe, 'Elizabeth Taylor's uses of romance: Feminist feeling in 1950s English fiction', *Literature and History*, 19.1 (2010) 50-65.; Janet Fink, Penny Tinkler, 'Teetering on the Edge: portraits of innocence, risk and young female sexualities in 1950s' and 1960s' British cinema', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 9-25. Claire Langhamer, 'Feelings, Women and Work in the long 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 77-92. Helen McCarthy, 'Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-war Britain' *Past and Present* 233.1 (2016) 269-305. Helen McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 46-61. Penny Tinkler, Stephanie Spencer, Claire Langhamer, 'Revisioning the History of Girls and Women in Britain in the long 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 1-8.

women like Mary Dawson and the part they played in educational leadership in an era deemed unimportant in terms of female empowerment.

A definition of terms, and clarification of a number of areas are required in order to contextualise aspects of the thesis. The first covers a consideration of the specific time period, between 1945 and 1968, and the ways this has been approached by historians. Further definitions are provided in the analysis of the concepts of community, agency, and citizenship versus feminism. Lastly, the role of biography and institutional history are considered, and the ways these can be used in the analysis of a person and a place.

Mary Dawson's principalship covers the years from 1945 to her retirement in 1968. How we name the period has a significant impact on how we think about it in terms of continuities and breaks. To describe this era as 'post-war' – as is often the case with histories of continental Europe – assigns greater emphasis to the immediate period after the cessation of hostilities; in the national context it evokes a period of contrasting hope and austerity, and in the story of Newton Park College, a specific time of challenge. The years after this testing beginning set a different tone, however, in which the established College could look ahead with more confidence. The term the 'long 1950s' has been chosen as it more effectively describes the period, as well as acknowledging the changes that took place within it – it looks back to the immediate post-war years as well as looking ahead to the 1960s. The same definition has been proposed by Caitriona Beaumont, Clare Langhamer, Stephanie Spencer, Penny Tinkler and others, as particularly useful when examining the history of gender, since it encompasses the decade of the 1950s, as well as a framing period on each side of the decade to allow a more fluid approach to the arbitrary nature of decade timescales.⁷ It includes the late 1940s and the early 1960s, in order to express a sense of relative coherence.

In a recent paper examining the 1950s, Tinkler, Langhamer and Spencer propose inclusion of the years from 1945 in the definition in order to bring into focus 'the immediate post-war period as a time when new trends were developed and/or established.' Amongst these trends were wider opportunity in education and increasing numbers of married women in the workplace. Yet despite visible change, the legacy of war and reconstruction cast a long shadow. Those who had

⁷ Penny Tinkler, Stephanie Spencer, Claire Langhamer, 'Revisioning the History of Girls and Women in Britain in the long 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 1-8, (p.2). This special issue of the *Women's History Review* dealt entirely with new scholarship on this period.

grown up in the aftermath of the Second World War remained conscious of its effect; the rationing of foodstuffs continued until the middle of the decade, young men were still conscripted for National Service until 1960, and bomb damage to towns and cities continued to be visible for many years. Change occurred as the economy grew stronger, but the early 1960s had much more in common with the 1950s than with the period of the mid-to-late 1960s with its emphasis on youth culture, civil rights and new expressions of freedom. Brown *et al* state that:

in popular consciousness, the 1950s were not so much a calculation of the calendar as a stretch of cultural time. They constituted the period from 1945 to 1963 – considerably more than a decade...and something of a marker in the cultural heritage of the twentieth century.⁸

Having established terms for the time frame, further exploration of the concepts of community, feminism and citizenship, is also required. Each concept is a contested one and represents fluid ideas, but each takes on certain meanings specific to the time period. Importantly, the meanings of these terms as employed by Mary Dawson and her students in the period were quite different to our current understanding. In the formation and development of Newton Park College, Mary Dawson sought to establish a strong community, a concept which is here defined as a group of people with common interests and aims, with a strong sense of place borne of a specific geographical location.⁹ This was even more important

⁸ Callum G Brown; Arthur J McIvor; Neil Rafeek, *The University Experience 1945 – 1975: An Oral History of the University of Strathclyde* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

⁹ The idea of community, and especially women's communities, are explored and discussed throughout the following; the broader subject of women's education is inextricably linked with the communities and networks of women discussed in these titles. Malcolm Cole, *Whitelands College: The History*, (London: Whitelands College Monographs, No 2, 1982). Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001). Alison Oram, *Women Teachers & Feminist Politics 1900-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). Mary Hilton, Pam Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2000). Felicity Hunt, *Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls & Women 1850-1950*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). June Purvis, *A History of Women's Education* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991). Carol Dyhouse, 'Apostates' and 'Uncle Toms': accusations of betrayal in the history of the mixed college in the 1960s', *History of Education* 31.3 (2002) 281 – 297. Carol Dyhouse, 'Troubled identities: gender and status in the history of the mixed college in English universities since 1945' *Women's History Review*, 12.2 (2003) 169 – 194. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Women Principals 1900 - 1960: Gender & Power', *History of Education* 29.5 (2000) 405-414. Christine Heward, 'Men and Women and the Rise of Professional Society: The intriguing case of teacher educators', *History of Education*, 22:1 (1993) 11 – 32. Dolly Smith-Wilson, 'Fighting the 'Damnable Triumph' of Feminism: battles between teachers' unions in interwar Britain', *Gender & Education* 19.6, (2007) 669-676. Pat Thane, 'Girton Graduates: Earning and Learning 1920s -1980s', *Women's History Review*, 13.3 (2004) 347-360. Kay Whitehead, 'Contesting the 1944 McNair Report: Lillian de Lissa's working life as a teacher educator', *History of Education* 39.4 (2010) 507-524. Kay Whitehead, 'Careers' Advice for Women and the Shaping of Identities', *Labour History*, 92 (2007) 57-74.

given the difficulties of the first few years of the College, when the absence of a physical home for the community became a crucial part of the College narrative. The strength and importance of community was promoted throughout Dawson's leadership, and was strongly reiterated throughout her career. If students were to become good teachers, they needed to be aware of community as the root, springboard and safety net of a society. All these things were evoked through Dawson's ethos – in her behaviour, in her speeches and writing, and in the ways she constructed the curriculum - and were reinforced through the collective memory of the College family. Dawson and her students also reference 'the democratic ideal' by which they meant shared responsibility, shared endeavour, commonality of purpose, and a group dynamic which operated for the benefit of the community. This was an idea which was uppermost in the minds of the post-war generation which remained aware of the potential results of fascism and dictatorship, as well as a central message within plans for the welfare state, in which 'all pay [and] all benefit.'¹⁰

In relation to 'feminism' the term is today viewed through the lens of several decades of activism and political awareness, stemming from the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.¹¹ More recently, the focus of feminism has shifted again, to include a growing cognisance of ongoing issues of gender equality amongst the current generation of young women. For the purpose of this study the definition of feminism has been contextualised within the meanings that Mary Dawson and the women of Newton Park College understood. To the cohort of women featured in this thesis, 'feminism' was an old-fashioned concept which had preoccupied previous generations, but which no longer applied in their own world, since the feminist fight for the vote had been won in 1928. The term was associated with their mothers' or grandmothers' generation, and seemed

¹⁰ Todd, *The People*, p.143.

¹¹ Ann Taylor Allen, *Women in Twentieth Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Judith M Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). Catherine Hall, *White, Male & Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism & History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992). Lesley A Hall, *Sex, Gender & Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000) June Hannam, *Feminism* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007). Maggie Humm, (Ed) *Feminisms: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992). David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951 – 1957* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010). Jane Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). Sue Morgan, (ed) *The Feminist History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, (London: Viking, 1997). Mary Spongberg; Ann Curthoys; Barbara Caine, (eds) *Companion to Women's Historical Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005). Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women*, (London: Virago, 1985) Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in 20th century Britain*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001).

to have little relevance to their own.¹² In later years, the women who lived through the ensuing decades of the twentieth century became familiar with the term in its 1970s iteration. Some, such as former Newton Park College student Shirley, born in 1942, wondered 'what all the fuss was about.'¹³ Shirley enjoyed a long career as teacher and rapid promotion to headteacher, and had experienced the fruits of influence and power. In her own estimation, she had never consciously known or been aware of any disadvantage or limitation, and is representative of the views expressed through oral testimony for this thesis.

Instead of identifying with feminism, the mid-twentieth century generation were more likely to align themselves with ideas of citizenship. Following the granting of the vote to women on equal terms with men in 1928, women's attention had shifted to embrace the meanings of full citizenship which such voting rights offered or implied. The main battle was thought to be over, and emphasis shifted to multiple smaller battles. There was a continuing need to explore the meanings and rights of the status of citizen, especially in terms of employment and pay.¹⁴

Caitriona Beaumont's work on women's associations describes the ways in which 'democratic citizenship with all its inherent rights and duties' provided a 'framework for women's participation in public life.'¹⁵ This concept of 'democratic citizenship' provides a starting point from which to understand the aims and ethos of Mary Dawson's work at Newton Park College. In 1928, Dawson was aged twenty-five and just beginning her professional life as a teacher at a Derbyshire grammar school; she was amongst the first cohort of younger women to be granted the vote. Her ideas about the possibilities for women that the status of citizenship conferred are evident in her writings and speeches: 'Society...offers you manifold opportunities for a full and abundant life denied to earlier generations...You can have the interest and satisfaction of a career or some form of public service.'¹⁶ A full life and dedication to public service were the expression of citizenship which Dawson espoused and have much in common with ideas expressed in the post-

¹² Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (London: Bodley Head, 1934) *passim.*, Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1992) p.74. Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human? Essays 1938* (Grand Rapids: Erdmann's Publishing, Michigan, 1971) p.21.

¹³ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁴ Pugh, *Women*, *passim*

¹⁵ Beaumont, *Housewives*,, p.40.

¹⁶ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

war period by British sociologist T.H. Marshall, the historiography of which will be explored in the next chapter.¹⁷

If citizenship includes active engagement within society and in public life, then the role of teacher could exemplify this.¹⁸ Education was long recognised as one of the ways in which women could engage in the public sphere; the developments in education and their part in the wider social changes of the era meant that education was an ideal stage on which women could put these ideas about citizenship and equalities into practical action.¹⁹ For women in the long 1950s, teaching was able to provide the necessary ingredients for full citizenship – membership of a community, rights of access to education, an awareness of the obligations which flowed from the role, and economic independence, which together, as Carol Gould has asserted, ensured ‘the availability of social and material conditions necessary for the achievement of purposes or plans.’²⁰ Mary Dawson felt that those conditions were there for her, and her students, and for this reason highlighted the ‘opportune moment’; a favourable climate in which to create a new venture where women could flourish. Teaching provided a secure profession with good prospects, a degree of flexibility, and the chance for economic independence.²¹

Mary Dawson frequently emphasised the right of women to pursue the ‘full and abundant life’. As well as providing a focus on women’s choice and agency, she also believed this made them more effective as teachers and leaders in their communities. In this way they could enact the participatory aspect of the role of

¹⁷ T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (first published 1949) with additional material by Tom Bottomore, (London: Pluto Press, 1992). Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1997). Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives & Citizens: Domesticity & the Women’s Movement in England 1928-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Kathleen Canning and Sonya Rose, *Gender, Citizenships and Subjectivities*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2002). Keith Faulks, *Citizenship*, (London: Routledge, 2000). Derek Heater, *A History of Education for Citizenship*, (London: Routledge Falmer, 2004). David Marquand, *Decline of the Public: The Hollowing out of Citizenship* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005). Matthew Grant, ‘Historicizing Citizenship in Post-war Britain’, *The Historical Journal*, 59.4 (2016) 1187-1206. Sue Innes, ‘Constructing Women’s Citizenship in the Interwar Period: the Edinburgh Women Citizen’s Association’, *Women’s History Review*, 13.4 (2004) 621-647. Ruth Lister, ‘Women, Economic Dependency and Citizenship’, *Journal of Sociology*, 19.4 (1990) 445-467. Ruth Lister, ‘Citizenship: Towards a feminist synthesis’, *Feminist Review* 57 (1997) 28-48. Sylvia Walby, ‘Is Citizenship Gendered?’ *Sociology*, 8.2 (1994) 379-395.

¹⁸ Lister, *Citizenship*, p.5.

¹⁹ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.45. Alison Oram, *Women Teachers & Feminist Politics 1900-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) *passim*. Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001) *passim*. Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) *passim*.

²⁰ Lister, *Citizenship*, citing Carol Gould, p.16.

²¹ Lister, ‘Women, Economic Dependency and Citizenship’, p.446.

citizen – the ‘active citizenship’ which involved taking one’s part in community life at individual, local and wider levels.²² The living of a full and useful life could also demonstrate the value of these women’s roles as educators and of education as a whole, by serving as examples and role models to the next generations. In this way, Dawson used current thinking to support her own vision of a woman’s right to the ‘abundant life’. Within this thesis, I use the term ‘responsible citizenship’ to describe and encompass Mary Dawson’s ideas for the practical application of the duties of citizenship, in return for the rights it conferred. For women of Dawson’s generation, citizenship was a new privilege, which had been earned through the decades-long effort of others, and which succeeding generations must uphold and pursue. In emphasising the central role of responsible citizenship, Dawson was advocating the importance of women as full members of a society, and demonstrating this through her own example.

Exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship gave women agency of their own. This thesis explores the ways that citizenship as both status and practice framed women’s agency in the long 1950s. Agency here is defined as the capacity to shape one’s own life and choices, and is in line with definitions adopted and developed by Lynn Abrams, Ruth Lister and Judith M Bennett.²³ Abrams uses the term to mean ‘the power of an individual to change or affect events, or to make choices that influence the course of history.’²⁴ Some of the women interviewed for this thesis knowingly made choices whilst others simply state that they made the most of the opportunities presented to them. Others still have become more aware of the difference they made – in their jobs, or in influencing the next generation – in hindsight. Lister asserts that ‘the idea of human agency is typically used to characterise individuals as autonomous, purposive actors, capable of choice.’²⁵ As trained professionals, the women of Newton Park College were certainly empowered to shape aspects of their own lives, and in their work as educators their influence also affected the lives of their pupils. They lived the ‘full and abundant lives’ that their College principal had so wholeheartedly recommended. On a wider scale, they were also important conduits of change in terms of the increasing numbers of women in higher education. The majority enjoyed long and

²² Lister, *Citizenship*, p.95.

²³ Judith M Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1997). Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 2nd Edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

²⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) p.75.

²⁵ Lister, *Citizenship*, p.36.

varied careers in teaching or education on a broader scale, in a range of occupations (see Appendix A). Their personal agency was further enhanced through the style of teaching they practised, since in the decades before the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988, individual classroom teachers enjoyed far greater freedom and autonomy in the way they taught and the choices they made for their pupils.²⁶ As one former student stated:

The other thing through here was child-centred education, everything we had here was based on 'child-centred', so we could go in and teach – not anything we liked, that sounds bad – but if somebody brought in some frogspawn that day, writing would be on frogspawn, maths would be on frogspawn...²⁷

Grant asserts that 'Agency is crucial to active citizenship: it is, after all, a theory based on individual and collective participation.'²⁸ The crossover between citizenship and agency is highlighted by Lister, who states that 'agency is the demonstration of women's autonomy framed within the rights and responsibilities of citizenship'.²⁹ Judith M Bennett further asserts that agency is the opposite of 'victimhood', with women 'as agents in creating their own spaces, own cultures, own lives.'³⁰ The Newton Park College women whose oral testimonies are used in this study certainly portray themselves as agents in their own lives, and at no point in their lives do they describe 'victimhood'. The only exception to these feelings is in the very minor consideration amongst those from the later period under review – the mid-1960s – who found the rules and regulations they were expected to follow at College rather annoying. However, this was at the time when rules were being questioned and criticised by both genders, and throughout society.

The changes to society brought about through the welfare and educational reforms of the post-war era also presented opportunities for individuals to express their own agency. A new distribution of the nation's resources in terms of health services, education, better training provision and wider employment opportunities made these things more fully accessible to a greater proportion of the population,

²⁶ Naomi, Oral history interview, citing the National Curriculum, introduced in 1988.

²⁷ Amy, female student, 1966-68. Oral testimony.

²⁸ Kathleen Canning and Sonya O Rose, Introduction: gender, citizenship and subjectivity: some historical and theoretical considerations, *Gender and History*, 13 (2001) 427 – 443, p.427, cited in Matthew Grant, Historicizing Citizenship in Post-war Britain, *The Historical Journal*, 59, 4 (2016) pp.1187-1206, p.1201.

²⁹ Lister, *Citizenship*, p.37.

³⁰ Judith M Bennett, cited in *The Feminist History Reader*, edited by Sue Morgan, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2006) p.67.

irrespective of class, gender or marital status. That important inequalities remained has been revealed by a deeper analysis of the realities and inequities of 'tripartite' education, but the perception of its promise and inherent possibilities in the late 1940s should not be overlooked.³¹ Post-war moves towards equality and greater individual agency must be seen in terms of what had previously existed, and the proposed redistribution of the country's welfare and educational resources was seen as the demonstration of the equality which many had sought, in terms of education and employment. There were now real choices for women, whether to train, to work, to marry, to have children or to combine all these things; for teachers, such choices had not existed before.

The women featured in this thesis have a strong sense of personal agency, although it is not associated with feminism – to them, this was the old battle. The women involved in Newton Park College between 1945 and 1968 perhaps had no specific appellation for their own contributions to society, although in the years since, it has become a more forceful area of debate once more. Instead their agency was expressed as active and responsible citizenship and it is this idea, and its expression, which will be explored throughout the thesis. These women were provided with opportunities in a democracy rebuilding itself anew in the aftermath of war and the responsibilities of citizenship carried the expectation that they make use of their education, training and skills. They repaid the investment which was made in them, in service to their schools and communities. In looking back, the women interviewed aligned their past and present selves, assessing

³¹ Sandra Acker, *Gendered Education* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1994). Richard Aldrich, *A Century of Education*, (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002). Madeleine Arnot, Miriam David, Gaby Weiner, *Closing the Gender Gap: Post-war Education and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). C J Bartlett, *A History of Post-war Britain 1945 – 1974* (New York: Longman, 1977). Harold Dent, *The Education Act 1944: Provisions, Possibilities and Some Problems*, 3rd Edition (London: University of London Press Ltd, 1947). Carol Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble: Panic & Progress in the history of young women* (London: Zed Books, 2013). Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson, Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise!* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). T Gorst, L Johnman, W S Lucas, *Post-war Britain 1945-1964: Themes & Perspectives* (London: Pinter, 1989). Lesley A Hall, *Sex, Gender & Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000). Felicity Hunt, *Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls & Women 1850-1950*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951 - 1957* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010). Roy Lowe, *The Death of Progressive Education*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007). James Obelkevich, Peter Caterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994). Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order: British Education since 1944*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1999). Michael Sissons, Philip French, *Age of Austerity*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964). Alan Sked, Chris Cook, *Post-war Britain: A Political History: 1945-1992*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993). Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A biography of the Welfare State*, 2nd Edition, (London: Harper Collins, 2001). Selina Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class*, (London: John Murray, 2014). Sally Tomlinson, *Education in a Post Welfare Society*, 2nd Edition, (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005). Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in 20th century Britain*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001).

their careers and reflecting on their own lives and influence. The language of heroism and ambition which the students express in the early years of Newton Park College is later more tempered, but the language of personal agency remains. As such, their oral histories have created new evidence about the long 1950s, whilst in the choice of which pieces of evidence to use, I have created yet another narrative. The hope is that the selection of these 'artful chunks' of testimony used remains truthful to the subjects' intention, guided by my personal respect for the people who shared their stories.³²

This study describes the experience of a relatively small group of women, that of the former students of Newton Park College. During what was obviously a period of widening participation in higher education, their experience may be typical of the women who trained to be teachers in the period after the Second World War, but they are far from representative of all women at that time. They were selected for training based on their aptitude and suitability for the teaching profession, as judged by Mary Dawson or her deputy. The students of Newton Park are therefore a specific group, based on their educational or personal capacity and the selection criteria this involved. However, several things need to be borne in mind within these restrictions. The post-war changes in education meant that an atmosphere of widening educational opportunity provided more people, and particularly women and girls, with the chance to remain in education. Fewer families had to face the bald choice of which child to support through secondary education. An expanded teacher training structure alongside the high demand for teachers post-training, the lifting of the marriage bar and a more buoyant economy meant that training to be a teacher was a sound career choice with almost guaranteed results; as Mary Dawson stated to her students 'Everybody wants *you*'.³³ This prevailing set of conditions made teaching a particularly suitable choice for aspirational young people whatever their background. The divisions which had existed between different types of schools and stages of education were intended to be broken down, and the teaching profession was being unified. This is reflected by the relative diversity of people whose qualification was not indicative of a specific educational level; a minimum educational requirement is suggested on application forms, but this was not always upheld. The candidates were instead those deemed

³² Katherine Borland, *That's not what I said*, in *The Oral History Reader* ed. by Rob Perks, Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998) pp.310 – 321.

³³ Mary Dawson, Lecture to students, *The First Year Out*, 2nd May 1963. Italics are Dawson's own.

suitable for the teaching profession as defined and understood by Mary Dawson and her staff. This is evidenced by those who attended Newton Park College, and reflected in the student records of the individuals themselves, and is a theme which will be explored in later chapters.³⁴

The thesis is arranged over six chapters, the first of which outlines the historiographies and methodologies employed within it. Some of this information is expanded in later chapters in order to give further context for each section.

Chapters 2 and 3 together provide the historical context and background for the founding of Newton Park College, and the woman who became its Principal. The first of these outlines the changes in education and specifically in teacher training in the mid-twentieth century, and the combination of research mentality and legislative background which took place in the lead up to the 1944 Education Act. 1944 also saw the publication of the McNair Report, which looked into the national provision of teacher education, analysed the existing capacity and made recommendations for its expansion. These chapters feature the specific interpretation and implementation of the act and the response to McNair in relation to teacher training, rather than any detailed analysis of the origins and evolution of national educational policy, because these were the key documents which Dawson herself cited as most influential in her own career as college principal. The development of a new and in Miss Dawson's view, 'revolutionary' educational system required a considerable enlargement of the profession, alongside the establishment of the welfare state, a new health service, demobilisation and efforts to rebuild the country in the aftermath of war. Newton Park College was founded as one of the many local authority institutions needed to help deliver the high numbers of women teachers the country required; a place where post-war themes of citizenship would be explored. The focus on a single institution allows an in-depth analysis of the archival documents, the ways the college developed over two decades, and what it meant to the students who trained there. Chapter 3 examines the background, early career and motivations of Mary Dawson, the first principal of the new women's College in Bath. Her life and career exemplified the life and opportunities of the university-educated, single woman of the interwar period, and prepared her for her role in leadership. After the Great War, at a time when society perceived a major numerical imbalance between the sexes,

³⁴ Student records held at Bath Spa University, Corsham Court (confidential).

membership of the teaching profession provided an independent life for a generation of women who did not marry. Women like Dawson held positions of authority and leadership, which was common amongst their peer group but unusual in the wider world.

The next chapters analyse the College itself and the course of its development, during Mary Dawson's leadership over the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Chapter 4 reveals the creation of Newton Park College in the immediate post-war period, amidst urgent haste, as well as extreme shortages in a period of austerity. These limitations affected the relationship between national and local government and the colleges who were all attempting to rebuild after conflict as well as embed new educational practices. These tensions became part of the day-to-day operation of the new establishment. There was much to do, and many obstacles to overcome, before the College could be established at Newton Park. Set in a country house landscape four miles from the city of Bath, Newton Park was a hereditary family estate in 1941 and a women's college by 1945. In the process of transition, Newton Park became a 'democratic space', an idea which is explored in more detail through Mary Dawson's own words, and which at the time was used for the expression of the post-war themes of citizenship and equality of opportunity. This chapter also evaluates an unexplored theme of English country house history, looking at the manner in which a private space became a public one through its use as an educational establishment. The estate, its built heritage and its landscape were used to underpin and enhance the training of teachers, who would become leaders in their communities beyond the College. Changing a former family estate into a modern college proved difficult under post-war conditions; the delays and frustrations became part of the narrative of college life, and the challenges influenced its development. In creating virtues out of difficulties, Dawson further underlined the aims and ethos of the College and set a pattern for its future evolution.

Chapter 5 moves to the 1950s, and analyses the ways that Mary Dawson's ideas, developed over her career, were applied to the college she led. It describes the growth of the community over its first ten years, and the atmosphere of care and support she created. This was a period of competing ideologies for women, and students chosen for teacher training entered the profession knowing that there were multiple ways in which they would be able to express citizenship in their lives. Dawson negotiated this trend by fostering ideas of responsible citizenship

amongst her students in their role as future teachers, alongside her continued focus on the importance of that role to society as a whole. As a local authority facility, the college was charged with producing the teachers that the country so desperately needed, but at the same time, the wider training college sector desired greater recognition of the profession. The chapter features Dawson's work at Newton Park, as well as her external professional networks, and her ongoing relationship with the local education committee by whom she was employed.

The final chapter outlines the development of Newton Park College through the final decade under Dawson's leadership, and the persistent growth demanded by the continuing teacher shortage. The desire amongst the training colleges for the ongoing development of the teaching profession was realised alongside the expansion and development of the colleges themselves, as they responded to legislative demand. In 1946, forty-five young women had embarked upon a two-year teaching certificate; in 1968, several hundred women and men undertook a three-year course, and the ground-work for those courses to become degree-bearing had been laid. On retirement, Mary Dawson was able to look back over a long career, and the fulfilment of many ambitions. At the same time she was forced to realise that the dominance of women like herself in higher education was over. The conclusion follows this chapter, and suggests further research to increase the focus on women's networks during the period of women's educational leadership.

Chapter 1

Historiography and Methodology

This introductory chapter outlines the different themes which are featured in this thesis. It describes the methodology of archival research in conjunction with aspects of oral history, memory and place, through which the story unfolds; it also presents the key historiographies in the areas of citizenship, the country house, and institutional and biographical histories.

Historiography

Mary Dawson, the College and her students represent aspects of the development of education, in particular, women's education in the twentieth century.¹ The crucial part played by education and the role of the teacher in women's emancipation has been explored by Alison Oram, whose work on women teachers in the interwar period provided the basis for research into Mary Dawson's formative career.² In addition, Carol Dyhouse, Pat Thane and Elizabeth Edwards

¹ For assessments of the legislative changes to education in the period of the 1944 Education Act, see Richard Aldrich, (ed) *A Century of Education*, (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002). Richard Aldrich, *An Introduction to the History of Education*, (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982). H C Dent, *Secondary Education for All: Origins and Development in England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1949). H C Dent, *The Education Act 1944: Provisions, Possibilities and Some Problems*, 3rd Edition (London: University of London Press Ltd, 1947). H C Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales 1800 – 1975*, (London: Longmans, 1977). Derek Gillard, *Education in England*, available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/> [Accessed 30.7.15] Peter Gosden, *The Evolution of a Profession: A study of the contribution of teachers' associations to the development of school teaching as a professional occupation* (Oxford: Blackwell 1972). John Lawson; Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973). Roy Lowe, *Education in the post-war years: A Social History*, (London: Routledge, 1988). Gary McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction: The 1944 Education Act and the Twenty First Century* (Ilford: The Woburn Press, 1994). Gary McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011). Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order: British Education since 1944*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1999). Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day*, (London: Heinemann, 1957).

² Alison Oram, *Women Teachers & Feminist Politics 1900-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). For more on the interwar period, see Dolly Smith-Wilson, 'Fighting the 'Damnably Triumph' of Feminism: battles between teachers' unions in interwar Britain', *Gender & Education* 19.6, (2007) 669-676. Additional material is presented about the post-war experience of women teachers in Christine Heward, 'Men and Women and the Rise of Professional Society: The intriguing case of teacher educators', *History of Education*, 22:1 (1993) 11 – 32. For examples of the interwar College principal, see Kay Whitehead, 'Contesting the 1944 McNair Report: Lillian de Lissa's working life as a teacher educator', *History of Education* 39.4 (2010) 507-524. Mary Hilton, Pam Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2000).

have each produced influential research into women in higher education. Dyhouse and Thane have both looked at women in higher education in the post-war period, providing analyses of young women's university experience. Edwards' study of women's teacher training colleges covers a longer timescale and looks at the origins of these colleges as feminine spaces. All of these works have offered a starting point from which to analyse the early development of Newton Park College, whilst extending the scope of research into women's education, teacher training and the expansion of higher education in the period 1945 - 1968.³

The idea of citizenship was fundamental to Mary Dawson's ideas, and the concept framed the ways she envisioned women's contribution to public life. Her ideas aligned with those advocated through T.H. Marshall's model of citizenship, which was written in the post-war era and specifically alluded to the situation at that time. There is no direct evidence that Dawson read Marshall, but as a well informed and well-read individual, it could be assumed that she was familiar with these prevalent ideas.⁴ The ways she expressed herself in this area certainly align with Marshall's assertion that citizenship is 'a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.'⁵ During a period in which British society was emerging from war, with a strong sense that war had been won by a community effort and which was about to embrace the possibilities of the Welfare State, Marshall's ideas were widely accepted. His theory has since been criticised for focussing on 'progression' which ignores the marginalised. Canning and Rose have instead described citizenship as 'one of the most porous concepts in contemporary academic parlance.'⁶ They note that 'Marshall's implicitly teleological model has been the frequent target of feminist critiques that point to the impossibility of mapping the struggles of minorities, women or colonised peoples.'⁷ Meanwhile, current research in the area of citizenship takes the

³ Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). Carol Dyhouse, "'Apostates' and 'Uncle Toms': accusations of betrayal in the history of the mixed college in the 1960s", *History of Education* 31.3 (2002) 281 – 297. Carol Dyhouse, 'Troubled identities: gender and status in the history of the mixed college in English universities since 1945' *Women's History Review*, 12.2 (2003) 169 – 194. Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001). Elizabeth Edwards, 'Women Principals 1900 - 1960: Gender & Power', *History of Education* 29.5 (2000) 405-414. For oral testimony of women in higher education see Pat Thane, 'Girton Graduates: Earning and Learning 1920s -1980s', *Women's History Review*, 13.3 (2004) 347-360.

⁴ Grant, 'Historicizing Citizenship' p.1191.

⁵ Marshall, Bottomore, *Citizenship*, pp.28-29.

⁶ Canning, Rose, *Gender*, p.1.

⁷ Ibid, p.2.

changing nature of the definition of citizenship as a starting point for discussion of the various aspects of the role of citizen and the altering perspectives of it over time. As a result the middle years of the twentieth century are identified as a period in which specific messages about the meanings of 'good' versus 'bad' citizenship were expressed. 'Good' citizens had taken part in the fight against totalitarianism and were ready to support reconstruction, for example. Tom Bottomore's commentary on Marshall's original essay states that 'In 1949, in Britain, it was possible to take a fairly optimistic view of the gradual extension of citizen's rights in a democratic society which was becoming more socialist in its structure, through the nationalisation of some major sectors of the economy and the creation of the National Health Service and a system of national education.'⁸ Matthew Grant's work explores this theme further, and identifies three 'registers' of citizenship, featuring the political and legal parameters of the status, one's sense of belonging to the national community, and lastly, participation in terms of the good/active citizen versus the bad/passive citizen. These 'registers', he asserts, are balanced according to changing political or societal focus. He further states that during the post-war years, and beyond into the 1950s, the balance leaned heavily towards the third register, participation, as a vital tool of reconstruction.⁹ This point is also taken up by David Marquand who views the mid-twentieth century as the 'zenith' of this participation, with a 'culture of service and citizenship'; not as a 'golden age' but in terms of people's attitudes towards participation in society.¹⁰ He demonstrates the changing nature of citizenship, and the ways that its meanings can alter over time or according to the prevailing political emphasis. As such, he proposes the idea that the 'culture of service' so familiar in the post-war world, has now disappeared, amidst the exigencies of later twentieth century economic and political tensions.¹¹ Derek Heater also identifies the tone of discussion and education about citizenship in the post-war period, and that it was focussed on 'habits of moral reflection and a high sense of duty.' Citizenship, he asserts, was held to be 'a matter of character.'¹²

Caitriona Beaumont's research has demonstrated the efforts that women's societies made, in the mid-twentieth century, to inform and educate their members

⁸ Marshall, Bottomore, *Citizenship*, p.46.

⁹ Grant, *Historicizing Citizenship*, p.1189.

¹⁰ Marquand, *Decline of the Public*, p.2.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Heater, *Education for Citizenship*, p.95.

about citizenship and its rights and duties, creating continuities between feminist and citizenship messages for women. Groups such as the Mother's Union, the Townswomen's Guild and the Women's Institute encouraged their members' understanding of the rights and duties of citizenship through talks, discussions and campaigns, thereby raising an awareness amongst their members about the change achieved, and further change still needed, in order to improve women's lives.¹³ Citizenship became the 'lodestar' of women's expression of agency.¹⁴ Mary Dawson identified the need for women to take part in public life as a key element through which her own students could express their agency, and it was certainly a crucial part of her own experience. In analysing the same ideas, Sue Innes' study of the interwar Edinburgh Women Citizen's Association asserts that 'citizenship as an organising concept could stretch across political representation, equal legal and employment rights, participation in civil society, and social and welfare campaigning.'¹⁵ It was the 'participation in civil society' which Dawson stressed in numerous speeches as well as in the overall ethos of Newton Park College. Dawson also recognised the 'emancipatory possibilities of the status itself' which she and women like her had exploited in their own lives and careers.¹⁶ T. H. Marshall's definition, cited above, includes membership of a community, equality, and the rights and obligations of community life. These aims would have made sense to people rebuilding after war, and the areas of welfare, health and education all employed the rhetoric of democratic citizenship; they were systems in which all who were able could contribute, and from which in turn all would benefit.

Ruth Lister highlights the tensions within Marshall's key elements of citizenship, which he stated as membership of a community, the rights and obligations which flow from that membership, and equality.¹⁷ She points out that feminist theorists have tended to concentrate on the ways in which Marshall's model does not reflect the reality of women's lives, and they see women as a group 'exiled from full citizenship' due to constraints imposed by domestic responsibility.¹⁸ Canning and Rose also address this issue and suggest that citizenship can only be practised in the public domain; women's roles at home or as 'reproducers of the nation'

¹³ Beaumont, *Housewives*, *passim*.

¹⁴ Lister, *Citizenship*, p.14.

¹⁵ Innes, *Women's Citizenship*, *passim*.

¹⁶ *Ibid* p.623.

¹⁷ Lister, *Citizenship*, *passim*.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.42; Walby, *Is Citizenship Gendered?* p.391.

therefore undermine their role as citizens.¹⁹ However this idea ignores the post-war sense of citizenship, which emphasised a wider range of obligations undertaken for the benefit of society than we now assume. These included, rather than excluded, the rebuilding of the family as part of national reconstruction, and in those terms, wives and mothers were also identified as demonstrating 'good' citizenship, a point also confirmed by Beaumont's research, which states that 'Women were encouraged to be active citizens who as housewives and workers would assist in the national recovery.'²⁰ This was especially true in a period which identified underpopulation as an important issue, and at the time, the same situation prevailed across much of Europe.²¹ The conflicting discourse which women were called upon to negotiate at the time is highlighted in Beaumont's assertion that in the long 1950s, paradoxically, feminist organisations were acknowledging that women's most vital task was that of motherhood, whilst 'even conservative women's organisations were advocating the dual role' of mother and worker.²²

The expressions of citizenship which occurred around sites such as the Newton Park estate deserve a broader analysis, and the repurposing of the country house, and its change from private to public space is an area of research which has yet to be fully explored. Such analysis will add to the historiography of the English country house, which has previously been dominated by the narrative of loss. More recently, another analysis has featured their role in terms of heritage visiting and public engagement with the heritage industry. The 'loss' aspect deals with the trajectory of the development of the country houses over time and the elite families who occupied them, followed by their demise in the twentieth century. With the narrative of loss dominating the discourse, there has been little consideration of the many alternative uses for houses which occurred, beyond that of wartime acquisition or their later rebranding as visitor attractions. The seminal works of Mark Girouard and David Cannadine each trace the history of the country house, following those patterns of elite authority followed by twentieth century demise. Girouard broadly outlines the country house and its development and dominance in the national past, as a centre of influence and power.²³ Cannadine's discussion

¹⁹ Canning, Rose, *Gender*, p.9.

²⁰ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.166.

²¹ Allen, *Women in Twentieth Century Europe*, p.86.

²² Beaumont, *Housewives*, pp.178-179.

²³ The narrative of loss dominates the discourse, and is covered authoritatively in David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1990). Girouard, Mark, *Life in*

of the manner in which country landowners failed to accept the changing world within which they existed is resonant of the narrative of Newton Park.²⁴ There were many such properties, and the twentieth century in particular saw hundreds of estates pass from private hands as they were converted to alternative uses in similar ways to the Gore Langton estate at Newton Park.²⁵

From the aspect of heritage use, more recent studies have been devoted to the country estate's modern repurposing within the heritage industry, focussing on narratives of private ownership and class distinction, and the art history interpretation of the 'treasure house'.²⁶ Its contribution to themes of equality and citizenship which were emerging throughout the twentieth century – and especially after 1945 – is an area which has been under-explored. This thesis presents an alternative view of the country house and its role as a channel of democratisation, following the opening up of private estates to public use. A generation of women who, in a previous era, would have little access to a private country estate, except perhaps as staff or tenants, were now able to live and work there as professional women, entitled to do so through their status as trainees or tutors and the importance placed on those roles nationally. Numerous higher education colleges, institutions and corporate bodies, inhabited country houses in this way throughout Britain in the post-war era; as a result they have been in a position to make a contribution to public understanding and appreciation of such heritage. In the period before popular tourism made country house visiting a common pastime – a shift which occurred in the later twentieth century – people such as the Newton Park College students had grown accustomed to such settings through daily contact and institutional use, and were in a position to disseminate their knowledge. Former Newton Park students testify to feeling comfortable in the space, and having a sense of homecoming when they returned to the campus for their oral history interviews for this study.

the English Country House : A Social and Architectural History (London: Yale University Press, 1978). Peter Mandler, 'Nationalising the Country House', in *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*, ed. by Hunter, Michael, (Stroud: Sutton, 1996) pp. 99-114 and also Mandler's *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). The demise of the country house way of life is also a very familiar and ongoing trope in fiction, non-fiction, film and television. Adrian Tinniswood also reflects on this topic: Adrian Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend: Life in the English Country House between the Wars* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016). Adrian Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: A History of Country House Visiting*, (London: National Trust Enterprises Ltd, 1998).

²⁴ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, *passim*.

²⁵ Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) *passim*.

²⁶ Girouard, *English Country House*, *passim*.

As the story of one woman principal and the College she founded, the thesis uses ideas of biographical as well as institutional histories. Dawson, her life and her work are, to quote McCulloch 'highly relevant to an understanding of broader issues in history, education and society at large.'²⁷ These broader issues feature women's expression of agency amidst the messages of feminism, citizenship and empowerment which engagement in education had long promoted.

A biographical approach is particularly useful when uncovering details of women's agency in the past, and presents Mary Dawson as one of a group of significant women, whose lives 'can reflect wider patterns within society or show the impact of social, economic and political change.'²⁸ Ludmilla Jordanova asserts that taking a person as 'a unit of analysis is to adopt a quite particular historical approach, which emphasises individual agency and sees the individual as a point at which diverse historical forces converge.'²⁹ Dawson's life leading up to the principalship of Newton Park College prepared her for that role, and hers is a common narrative amongst university educated women of the early twentieth century. She is therefore 'a vehicle for exhibiting an age,'³⁰ 'a prism through which to view the complex layers of society, culture and politics'³¹ and a prime example of a woman at 'the intersection of the social structure with individual lives.'³²

The time frame of the thesis, 1945 – 1968, encompasses the history of the College's first three decades, so is not a complete institutional history. In describing the origins of the institution, it attempts to place the events and developments of the College within the wider context of educational change and the opportunities this brought for women, showing the agency and tropes of citizenship the 1950s generation were able to exploit. It seeks to recover details of the College's roots in women's education and leadership which have since been overlooked. In this respect it is neither the 'documentary narrative celebrating progress and growth' described by Spencer *et al*,³³ nor is it an example of the

²⁷ McCulloch, *History of Education*, p.1.

²⁸ Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) p.87.

²⁹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2000) p.41.

³⁰ Martin, 'Interpreting Biography', p.94.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.101.

³² Ruth Watts, 'Gendering the Story: Change in the history of education,' *History of Education* 34.3 (2005) 225-241. p.230. Watts also points out the relative lack of focus on twentieth women educators and their contribution to education overall.

³³ Stephanie Spencer; Andrea Jacobs; Camilla Leach, *Alumni Voices: The Changing Experience of Higher Education* (Winchester: Winchester University Press, 2015). *passim*.

‘sentimentally reminiscent’ accounts outlined by Crook.³⁴ Brown *et al* also reflect on the tendency for institutional histories ‘to focus on formation and advancement...from a management perspective...aimed at a graduate audience.’³⁵ Others also highlight older origins, persuasively hinting at longevity for a twenty-first century audience in a competitive academic market.³⁶ This was the case at Bath Spa University, when it was the earlier history of the School of Art and Design, rather than the teacher training college, which for a time formed the most prominent part of its founding narrative, as part of a marketing campaign which emphasised the creative industries.³⁷

In the use of individual testimony, oral history and personal archives, in addition to the official documents, my aim is similar to that stated by Brown, McIvor and Rafeek, ‘to provide at base a memory and recollection with which to understand the complex forces at work in the revolution of higher education in the middle of the twentieth century.’³⁸

There is also the consideration that institutions run by, and for women, had a greater responsibility to control and produce their own histories as a ‘feminist impulse.’³⁹ Spongberg *et al* also assert that ‘early women’s rights activists recognised that the absence of women from the historical record paralleled their absence from the political stage and took care to record and chronicle their own campaigns.’⁴⁰ This sense of responsibility and commitment to chronicle the history of women’s participation in public life may explain Mary Dawson’s own archive collection, from which much of the evidence for this thesis is taken. It uses the biography of Dawson and details of the institution’s history during the early days of Newton Park College to explore the role of women and education in the twentieth century.

Archival research and oral history testimony

³⁴ David Crook, ‘Teacher education as a field of historical research: retrospect and prospect’ *History of Education* 41.1 (2012) 57 – 72. p.64.

³⁵ Brown *et al*, *University Experience*, p.4. Examples include: Jennifer Bone *Our Calling to Fulfil: Westminster College and the changing face of teacher education 1951 – 2001* (Bristol, Tockington Press, 2003); Peter Linehan (ed) *St John’s College Cambridge: A History* (Woodbridge The Boydell Press, 2011); Helen Mathers, *Steel City Scholars: The centenary history of the university of Sheffield* (London, James and James, 2005);

³⁶ For example: Nigel Watson, *The Story of Roehampton University*, London, Third Millennium, 2010

³⁷ Bath Spa University – Our History available from <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/culture-and-values/history/> [Accessed 9.3.19]

³⁸ Brown *et al*, *University Experience*, p.1.

³⁹ Caine, *Biography*, p.44.

⁴⁰ Spongberg *et al*, *Women’s Historical Writing*, p.182.

The creation of this women's history is built upon research into their lives and actions, using archival research in combination with analysis of personal testimony. It seeks to expand our knowledge of women's agency and contribution to society in the past, to find their voices and allow those voices to be heard. Their own contribution to the history of the College, through the evidence they left behind or through oral history interviews given retrospectively, presents two narratives. The physical evidence, in the form of official documents and personal papers, are seen through the lens of current analysis, whilst memories continue to be processed throughout life; they are 'living processes, which become transformed, imbued with new meanings each time we recall them.'⁴¹

In investigating the experience of a group of women and men in the mid-twentieth century, this thesis uses official written records kept in the Bath Spa University Archive and Mary Dawson's own personal collection, in combination with the oral history testimony gathered for the Archive project between 2011 and 2014. Primary source material was also consulted in Bath, Coventry and Birmingham. Bath Record Office holds the City of Bath Council papers.⁴² Warwick Modern Records Centre is the main British repository for national archives of trade unions and employers' organisations, which includes the records of the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education (ATCDE), a small association which represented teachers and lecturers working in teacher training colleges and university education departments. Mary Dawson was an active member of the group, and served its aims in a number of roles.⁴³ The Cadbury Research Library's Special Collection contains the University of Birmingham's records, and these were consulted with reference to Mary Dawson's education there in the early 1920s.

The primary source documents relating to the College held in the Bath Spa University Archive have been gathered together very recently, as part of the creation of an institutional repository. The overall collection reflects the often

⁴¹ Rose, *Memory*, p.307.

⁴² A set of duplicate Council Minutes (1897-1974) from Bath Record Office is also held at Bath Spa University Archive at Newton Park. Bath Record Office was also the source for the large collection of legal papers relating to the administration and sale of the Newton Park Estate in the early 1940s.

⁴³ Housed at Warwick University, Warwick Modern Records Centre also features the history of the University itself. Coventry College of Education was a post-war Emergency Training College which followed a similar trajectory to Newton Park College; through growth and amalgamation it became Warwick University. It was led by Joan D Browne, who was part of the ATCDE alongside Mary Dawson. Browne wrote the history of the ATCDE in 1979. Browne's papers are also held at Warwick Modern Records Centre.

arbitrary nature of archival resources, and consists of a wide range of material. Personal collections of ephemera sit alongside institutional minute books; there are College scarves, photographs, prospectus collections and newspapers. Amidst the inevitable gaps which occur in any archive, Mary Dawson's own papers stand out. She systematically assembled and preserved the records featuring the creation of Newton Park College, in a series of annotated scrapbooks, albums and folders. This personal collection therefore represents one individual's efforts to chronicle every aspect of the newly founded enterprise, and to frame the narrative in a specific way. This in itself is a striking reflection of Mary Dawson's character and intentions at the College. These records tell one story of events, and are framed in somewhat heroic terms, featuring new beginnings, pioneers, and community-builders engaged in a new endeavour. This is partly due to the circumstances of the first few years, which were 'heroic', but also to the ways in which Mary Dawson and her students chose to tell their stories. They created, and then sustained, the heroic narrative out of the realities of the early years, and the rhetoric they adopted to explain what happened, as their defining motif. These combined at the time to build the creation story of the College. Documents and letters which look back at this period and written by those involved, tend to heighten the ideals of the age along with this 'creation myth'. The Dawson Collection is therefore a largely positive reflection of what took place and what was achieved, selected by Dawson herself and kept by her over many years. Part of the collected documents include an album of newspaper cuttings, which contain local and national newspapers, and both positive and negative comments about the College and its Principal. Those from the local Bath press feature reports of council business, using the direct speech of those involved; reflecting mundane council matters, but with heightened dramatic focus.⁴⁴ There are also letters from the public, features, and photographs. The press cuttings therefore show a more varied set of opinions about Newton Park, but the fact that the whole collection was gathered, curated and kept by Dawson and her friend, Hannah Lawrance means it remains just one side of a multi-faceted narrative.

The Bath Spa University Archive itself has been developed since 2011, and I was instrumental in its formation and day-to-day operation under the guidance of Dr Roberta Anderson. Student undergraduates assisted in such processes as

⁴⁴ The dates and headlines featured in the newspaper cuttings have been compared to the Minutes of Meetings, Bath Education Committee, 1945 – 1968, (BC/2/1/72/9-24).

recording and cataloguing the archival material, much of which had been scattered across offices and storage facilities in the university. Other material was donated as part of the oral history element of the project; for example, Mary Dawson's own collection of papers was donated by a former student, Valerie, who had known her well, and had been responsible for clearing Dawson's house after her death in 1988.⁴⁵ Having spent the intervening years stored in a loft, the collection of boxes found its way to the Bath Spa University Archive after Valerie was informed about the project by another *alumna*. The Archive continues to grow in this way, and has recently passed into the care of the University's library service.

Analysis of the institutional documents, personal archive collections and oral testimony enables the bones of documentary evidence to be enhanced by the richer 'flesh' of lived experience and memory. The institutional papers – minute books, financial reports and formal correspondence – provide information about processes, decision-making and systems. Certain characters appear by name, for example as governors of the College, or as members of the City of Bath Education Committee; roles on these bodies change and names come and go over time. Some names appear in several guises over a long period. For example Miss M.E. Lewis was a College governor, who also corresponded with Dawson in a more personal capacity. Her letters feature in Dawson's scrapbook, congratulating her handling of a difficult meeting, or sending good wishes during illness. Theirs appears to be a professional relationship with more personal touches during crisis points. In other correspondence, members of the Education Committee or Council with whom Dawson dealt, are mentioned by name, by role, or by an initial, according to circumstance. It is therefore not often clear to whom she is referring. What is clear, however, is that, according to the archive documents, she met with support as well as opposition during her years as Principal. This combination is demonstrated in the primary sources used, and is further discussed in later chapters.

Oral history presents memories, perceptions and versions of the past. It enables the historian to investigate life experiences, and allows individuals to express any sense of personal agency they felt and experienced; it reveals what people did, as well as what they now believe about their lives.⁴⁶ This filtering of memory through experience and time may alter detail, but does so in a way which provides further

⁴⁵ Valerie, female student, 1951-1953, Oral testimony.

⁴⁶ Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop*, 12 (1981) 96-107. p.99-100.

information and clues about the person, the past, and the lives they have lived. The importance of oral history as a valuable tool for social historians is long established.⁴⁷ The use of oral history and personal testimony seeks to restore the detail of the past to institutional papers such as minute books, official correspondence and organisational documents. The oral history interviews were gathered as part of the Bath Spa University Archive project, to be added to the archive collection in the understanding that they would be preserved. The former students and staff who came forward for interview made contact in response to the University's own online information. Some then responded to introductions from other participants, or word-of-mouth recommendations. This was a deliberate part of the interview process, since voluntary interviews are usually far more rewarding to both interviewee and interviewer. Ethical considerations of confidentiality, privacy and choice over what was said, provided a reassuring framework in which an atmosphere of trust was built with interviewees. Of the thousands of students who were eligible for the oral history phase of this research, a small fraction volunteered, and all were therefore highly self-selecting. Of the fifty interviews carried out, only a proportion of those covered the years of Dawson's leadership, meaning that twenty-nine were finally analysed for this thesis. These were predominantly women and some men, who attended the College in the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, with dates of birth ranging between the mid-1920s up to the end of the Second World War. Appendix A provides further detail on each of the participants.

As lead researcher for the Oral History Project, I conducted interviews, directed undergraduate History students in oral history methodology, developed policies and procedures, and oversaw all the stages involved pre- and post-interview, including transcription, data storage and cataloguing. A framework of general questions based on a broadly chronological life history provided the structure of interviews, which was the same for all contributors. This was explained to each

⁴⁷ Lynn Abrams, *Myth & Materiality in a Woman's World: Shetland 1800 – 2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010). Stefan Berger, Bill Niven, *Writing the History of Memory*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). Sherna Berger Gluck, Daphne Patai, *Women's Words: The feminist practice of oral history*, (London: Routledge, 1991). Rob Perks, Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998). Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). Joan Tumblety, *Memory & History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013). Kathryn Haynes, 'Other Lives in Accounting: Critical Reflections on Oral History Methodology in Action' (Unpublished) University of York Department of Management Studies, Working Paper No 21, 1743-4041 (no date). Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop*, 12 (1981) 96-107. Joan Sangster, 'Telling our stories: feminist debates and the use of oral history', *Women's History Review*, 3:1 (1994) 5-28.

person before any recording began. The interviewees also understood that I was gathering information which would contribute to this study. The broad set of questions covered family background, choice of higher education course, the experience of college and subsequent careers and personal lives. Individuals were free to add to this framework, expanding each area as they chose, so that their own sense of agency could emerge. The chronological approach provided a clear direction for the interview, enabling the memory retrieval process and narrative to continue smoothly and naturally. In comparison to a previous project, I found the chronological approach useful, as it had the potential to trigger memories long dormant.⁴⁸ By using a general set of questions, the interview process avoided specific questioning in directions that were too personal or leading, and allowed the subject to dictate the pace and content they felt appropriate to their own narrative. Edwards states that the oral history process, and direct questioning, 'enables the interviewer to interrogate the interviewee and to ask questions to which [the interviewer] seeks answers.'⁴⁹ The sense that 'interrogation' might be required ran contrary to the methodology used in this case, as experience alerted me to the risk that subjects are likely to give answers they feel the interviewer wants to hear, instead of the ones they themselves wish to give. Therefore, within the interview process, direct questioning was only used to clarify points, confirm detail, or to check spellings or names.

After the interview, the recording was transcribed verbatim, before being given back to the interviewee for checking and editing as they wished. At this stage, several of the interviewees added information for clarification, such as fuller descriptions or specific dates. No one felt the need to remove any large sections, although this was clearly presented as their choice. The editing process therefore resulted in the creation of a composed narrative – an account which, according to Abrams, 'achieves coherence, with which the interviewee can be content'.⁵⁰ Some were more heavily edited and composed than others according to personal editing choices made by the subjects themselves. All these personal contributions to the project were equally valued for the detail they added, and the subjects' wishes for the use of their memories respected. At each interview, an atmosphere of trust

⁴⁸ During research in 2009/2010, I interviewed a group of twelve women who had lived through the Second World War. Interviews took place within a group setting, and involved talking to the women about their experiences, and writing down their responses in note form, which were written up afterwards. This experience helped me to formulate a more effective methodology for this study.

⁴⁹ Edwards, *Teacher Training*, p.3.

⁵⁰ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.195.

and rapport was engendered, which was a valuable part of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. The time taken to establish this proved valuable, as several of the subjects offered further information or further interviews. By avoiding pressure in this way, channels of communication were left open for future collaboration between interviewer and subject. The interviewees therefore had individual control over aspects of the interview process, and subsequently gave consent to the use of their individual contributions for further study. As a result, the conscious act of remembering was subject to further filtering, selection, change and adaptation. Some left the transcript as it was, some edited for clarity and some edited more heavily in order to create a narrative flow. None of the interviews used here differed significantly in terms of information once this self-editing stage was completed. Subjects knew that this post-edit transcript was the one which would be used for the study. Permission was sought and received as part of the whole process.⁵¹ This permission took the form of a 'Copyright and Consent' form, which was carefully explained. The interview subjects could then feel reassured that their personal recollections would be used considerately and respectfully, as well as being kept permanently in the University Archive for future research and reference. Alessandro Portelli argues that the study of the transcript over the spoken interview changes the interpretation of a person's words, since the intonation, speed and immediacy of speech is lost.⁵² For this study, I remember the situation and flavour of each interview through my involvement and interest in each subject, and can recall the person through their words; however Portelli's concern to have as much information as possible about each individual will mean that any future research is more problematic, as the transcribed interview alone lacks real presence and voice. For this reason, the recorded interview itself, the verbatim transcript, and the edited version, remain part of each archived item, along with the consent documentation and any correspondence with the subject.

In re-reading and analysis of the interviews, my attention focused on the topics the interviewees raised within the broad framework of questions. Textual analysis then highlighted a number of recurring themes, such as the background of the students, the environment of the College, the kind of training the students received, the philosophy behind the teaching they had experienced, and the ways in which all of

⁵¹ The oral histories analysed in this study have all been used with permission.

⁵² Alessandro Portelli, cited in Abrams, *Oral History*, p.108

these influenced their careers. These themes frequently coincided with those suggested by Mary Dawson herself in her own writings and interviews. Her collection of papers, handwritten speeches, and an extended personal interview from 1967, contained many of her ideas and the philosophy behind the character of the College she created. These in turn suggested the focus for my research and provided the outline of the thesis. The oral histories therefore provided emerging data for research. This approach aligns with Brown *et al*, who used oral history 'in a way that has sought to allow, as much as possible, the testimony to generate its own agenda.'⁵³ In addition, I paid particular attention to the language each person used and the ways such language reflected personal action and agency.

The interviewees were aged between seventy and eighty-seven years at the time of interview. They were interested in recording their life experiences, and adding their own histories to the history of the College itself, thereby displaying the natural human desire 'to leave something of oneself behind'.⁵⁴ Most were proud of their association with Newton Park and with their personal contribution to its story. The age of the younger members of the interview group is relevant. They had recently retired when they came for interview; typically, a life event which leads to introspection, the evaluation of a life's work and a desire to pass on one's knowledge. The 'transmissive functions' brought about by this phase of life can frequently feature the sharing of experience and the analysis of a career.⁵⁵

Oral testimony provides a way of understanding the past through the lens of those who experienced it, therefore adding detail and further clarity to the framework of institutional documents provided by minute books, prospectus pamphlets and photographs. It provides the raw material for historical analysis as well as the opportunity to analyse what is said and the way it has been recalled. Those subjects who could not come to Newton Park for an interview chose instead to write down their memories. The act of writing produces a different representation of memory, one which is often more considered, and has a different sense of place, as the subjects are describing a place in mind, rather than a place before their eyes. Thomson asserts that 'the relationships and motivations of life writing are different to those of oral history, and people may well write different stories to

⁵³ Brown *et al*, *University Experience*, p.258.

⁵⁴ Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 2000) p.17.

⁵⁵ Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces*, p.132.

the ones they speak, not least because they have more control when they tell their own story.⁵⁶ This is evident in the style and content of the written memoirs. Comparison between written and spoken testimony reveals a stronger narrative thrust within the written memoir, but a similarity of content. Those alumni who chose to return to their former settings, whether for the first time or after repeated visits over the years, share similar reactions to the experience, recalling their sense of belonging and their appreciation of the setting. Despite the growth of the campus in the intervening years, and numerous additions and alterations to buildings and their use, returning students often found more similarities than differences. In the course of the study, only one interviewee chose not to return, stating that she would rather keep her memories of the College 'intact', although she was very happy to be interviewed away from the campus.

Part of the importance of the Newton Park experience to those who chose to return for interview lies in the recognition and appreciation of the College as the primary community, along with the smaller communities of friendship groups. For several of the interviewees, the intervening years have been spent in evaluating, appreciating, and analysing their own experiences, often through reunions, continued friendships and in light of their shared career experiences since leaving Newton Park. Episodes and shared experiences may be filed as archival memory, rehearsed, and remembered when old friends regroup.⁵⁷ In this way they have assimilated one another's ideas and created joint narratives through the interplay of group dynamics. Halbwachs considered the importance of such communication in the construction of memory, and the ways that collective memory can differ significantly from personal memories. These varying intersubjectivities can be traced through the oral history process with the Newton Park alumni, and whether collective or personal, reveal additional information about the interview process.

The use of oral history also encompasses feminist methodology, in that it gives specific voice to women and their personal experience. In contrast to the archival sources used in this study, the more recently gathered oral testimony is reframed through what has happened since the long 1950s, and the more forceful feminist ideas of the later twentieth century tend to overshadow the contribution towards

⁵⁶ Alistair Thomson, cited in Shelley Trower, *Place, Writing & Voice in Oral History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011) p.7.

⁵⁷ James Fentress, Chris Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1992) p.85.

equality made by the post-war generation. Feminist researchers have formerly noted the potential for women's reluctance in the self-promotion and discussion of their lives. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai's seminal work *Women's Words* explores this theme in detail, whilst work by Penny Summerfield, Lynn Abrams and others further acknowledge the possibility that women may have to be encouraged to tell their stories, in the belief that their lives are unimportant in terms of historical information.⁵⁸ Joan Sangster agrees that reassurance might be needed for women to express themselves freely, and that their narratives are likely 'to be characterised by understatement, avoidance of the first person point of view, rare mention of personal accomplishments and disguised statements of personal power.'⁵⁹ Abrams also describes the tendency for women to 'downplay...their experiences because they often do not conform to what is publicly presented as significant in mainstream history.'⁶⁰

This was far from the case in this study. The interviewees had worked wholly or partly as teachers in their careers, and in later life, all had retained involvement in public life to some degree. By nature and training, they are communicators, and conduits of information. They are accustomed to evaluating and considering their words to impart information effectively. They are also used to being listened to, and serving as figures of authority, to children and young people in the classroom setting, as well as to peers, the wider school community and often beyond. This is particularly true of the former primary school teachers in this study, who formed the bulk of the subject group. As one interviewee asserted "We wouldn't be very good teachers if we couldn't tell a story."⁶¹ This tendency to 'perform' their personal stories in an authoritative manner demonstrates their choice of career as well as their confidence in what they have to say.⁶² Experience with the former students of Newton Park shows that far from being reluctant to place themselves at the centre of their narratives, these women have been integral elements of the

⁵⁸ Abrams, *Oral History*, p.112; Sangster, 'Telling our stories', p.7.

⁵⁹ Sangster, 'Telling our stories', p.7.

⁶⁰ Abrams, *Oral History*, p.71.

⁶¹ Wendy, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

⁶² The confidence of women in telling their stories is explored in a paper given by Lynn Abrams, *Oral History and Liberating Women's Voices*, July 13th 2017, and appears in Lynn Abrams, "Don't mention the f-word: Reconciling Fragmented Narratives with the Feminist Research Frame" in *Beyond Women's Words: The Personal, Political, and Ethical Challenges of Doing Feminist Oral History* ed. by Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Franca Iacovetta (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018). Aspects of the performative within oral history interviews are further discussed in Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010). Rob Perks, Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998). Shelley Trower, *Place, Writing & Voice in Oral History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

communities they have operated within and understand their own significance to those communities. The assumption about women's diffidence is therefore under scrutiny by current scholars, and this thesis adds to that scholarship. Lynn Abrams proposes the term 'feminographies' to describe the oral histories of women 'who have benefited from the material and ideological change of the post-war decades – [they] have the confidence and the words to speak 'authentically'...[and] knowledge of the validity of their experiences.'⁶³

As experienced teachers, the cohort of former students who came for interview were confident individuals and not reticent in discussing their lives.⁶⁴ Subjects tended to display a degree of critical analysis of their experiences, with neither positive or negative experience displaying extremes of reaction; they are comfortable with their experiences and narratives and the interviews reflect their professional lives and self-confidence. This is in interesting contrast to another series of oral testimony interviews, carried out as part of the Bath Spa University Archive work, with former students of Bath Academy of Art. This group were inclined to play down their own experiences, overlooking their own stories and instead focusing on the notable artists who had taught them. Famous or influential names of the art world figured strongly, along with lists of persons known, encountered or seen.

The older women in the sample also had a sense of time passing and that their experiences needed to be recorded for future reference. They happily provided a narrative in which they discussed their largely satisfying careers in education. They reflected on the very different working conditions of teachers today, and were of the opinion that they had enjoyed far more agency and autonomy in their own careers; they were 'agents whose very presence transformed our understanding of the social world.'⁶⁵ By allowing these individuals to tell their story and describe their own agency, the women's own voices, their personal motivations and many of the ideas of the period are revealed.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the interviewees, as my own parents' generation, used familiar terms or points of reference which I understood. We were on familiar mutual ground, with shared references and a degree of empathy which gave a depth to certain references, connections and

⁶³ Abrams, *Oral History and Liberating Women's Voices*, p.1.

⁶⁴ Trower, *Place, Writing & Voice*, pp. 97-98.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.1-2.

⁶⁶ Bennett, *Feminism*, p.14.

understandings.⁶⁷ This intersubjectivity deepened the interview experience for the subject, for myself as interviewer, and for the undergraduate assistants involved with the interview process. This also helped to allay any issues of authority of my own position within the university.⁶⁸

Despite a dominant image of domesticity and retreat from public life for the period of the long 1950s, analysis of women teachers of the post-war period helps to establish their influence as a driving force for later feminist thinking. This was an important period of consolidation, with the realisation of full citizenship in which women could be educated, trained and make real life choices, and pass on their experiences and independence of thought to the next generation.

Memory and Place

Oral History is the act of recording and gathering witness about the past. The study of memory provides the critical analysis of those histories and what they tell us about the lived experience and how it is recalled. In her building of the Newton Park College community, Mary Dawson consciously called on memory as a method of construction. Through repetition, the use of emotive language and descriptions of the landscape, she called her students back to the College, evoking the familiar 'landscapes of the mind' in newsletters, student magazines and correspondence.⁶⁹ Historical layers of memory existed when Newton Park was a family estate, and these could be appreciated by the students who lived and studied there through the extant built heritage of the park. In the years since, fresh cohorts of College students have laid down their own memories year by year. The site therefore represents the palimpsestic landscape of memory, brought alive again to those former students who returned for interview. Memory is strongly linked to the specific time and place, and strengthened by the larger community once again gathered through the recalling of their sense of place and belonging. The Newton Park landscape, the place itself and its physical and sensory characteristics play an important role in the personal and collective memory. Returning students are reminded of the power of place, and their often overwhelming first impressions. Mary Dawson believed that the environment of the

⁶⁷ Gluck and Patai, *Women's Words*, p.222.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, *passim*.

⁶⁹ Annette Russell, 'Remembering places never visited: connections and context in imagined and imaginary landscapes', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16 (2012) 401-417, p.402.

College itself had the capacity to influence the students' individual development, with its ancient buildings and abundant nature, and she reiterated the same idea in her philosophy for the College.

Newton Park College students' oral histories are therefore 'deeply grounded in time and place.'⁷⁰ The two or three years spent at Newton Park represent a concentrated period of rapid personal growth, in a relatively closed environment. It is inevitable that a strong sense of place would therefore emerge, along with memories of first-time independence, self-discovery and the freedoms this entails. The students have a 'shared social identity' of the years spent on campus, as well as their shared career paths.⁷¹

These ideas are explored by Truc, Cohen and Conway, who describe the power of place in the making of memories. A specific location like Newton Park acts as key feature in the forging of memories, and since the student experience represents a peak time in their lives, is an important component for their growing maturity and independence.⁷² Revisiting such places may 'spoil' personal or collective memories, or equally, reinforce them. In the interview process, this needs to be considered, as revisiting a place with such powerful memories can be an overwhelming experience; the building of trust within the interview process is therefore crucial to a successful outcome for all parties. The consideration of the power of place, and its relation to memory borrows theories from the discipline of geography.⁷³ Anderson describes aspects of place, and the palimpsestic landscape with its 'ongoing compositions of traces'.⁷⁴ This is particularly significant in an educational establishment, as each intake of students puts down its own layer of memory, and 'the past is present in places in a variety of ways.'⁷⁵ Newton

⁷⁰ Trower, *Place, Writing and Voice*, introduction.

⁷¹ Linda Shopes, *Oral History and the Study of Communities*, in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Rob Perks, Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998) pp.261 – 270, p.261.

⁷² G Truc, 'Memory of places and places of memory: for a Halbwachsian socio-ethnography of collective memory', *International Social Science Journal*, 62.203/204 (2011) 147 – 159; G Cohen, M.A Conway, *Memory in the Real World*, (Hove & New York, Psychology Press, 2008).

⁷³ Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places & Traces* (London: Routledge, 2010). Erica Carter, James Donald, Judith Squires, *Space & Place: Theories of Identity & Location* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993). Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 2000). Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, (London: Polity Press, 1994). Miles Ogborn, Charles W. J Withers, *Georgian Geographies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, (London: Fontana, 1996) Shelley Trower, *Place, Writing & Voice in Oral History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

⁷⁴ Anderson, *Places & Traces*, p.11.

⁷⁵ Doreen Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 39 (Spring, 1995), pp. 182-192. p.186.

Park is particularly rich in these layers of history, and it carries the successive traces of individuals, friends and cohorts of students. The built heritage also provides a certain atmosphere which hints at the passage of time over many centuries, and the setting and its long history add considerably to these layers of memory, as well as assisting memory retention, and recall. Former students feel that Newton Park is 'theirs' and have a very strong attachment to the place and to their memories of it. Some of these memories are heavily rehearsed, especially collective memories which exist within groups of friends.⁷⁶ David Matless confirms the strong link between landscape and a sense of identity, and the role these play for individuals and groups.⁷⁷ The layers of memory are determined by place, time, emotions and senses, which combine to influence performance, language, and attitude in the recalling of the past.⁷⁸ Like Proust's madeleine, the sensory experience of visiting a setting like Newton Park brings back the capacity to recall a former life and a former self.⁷⁹

As a researcher, it was interesting to be part of this process, and to welcome former students back to the College site, to witness the way that the act of revisiting helped the interview process by stimulating the senses once again.⁸⁰

The historic buildings, the grounds and the rural setting all contribute in their way to this sensory experience. In order to facilitate a relaxed atmosphere for what might have proved a traumatic foray into the past, the quieter periods of university vacations or weekends were used for meetings. Without the constant presence of traffic and the bustle of today's students, the campus presents a more peaceful face, and despite the presence of new buildings, the landscape appears largely unchanged. Most of the interviewees opted to be taken around the campus, to see the developments in the built environment and to explore favourite places, and these walks often elicited further memories. As a rural setting, the Newton Park landscape provides abundant sensory triggers to memory in the passing of the seasons, the wildlife of lake and wood, and the memory of the College's special events, such as the annual Commemoration celebration, which Dawson established. This was also part of the fixing of the community ideology in students'

⁷⁶ S Rose, *The Making of Memory: From Molecules to Mind*, (London, Bantam, 1992) p.307.

⁷⁷ Matless, David, *Landscape & Englishness* (London: Reaktion, 2001). *passim*.

⁷⁸ Trower, *Writing & Voice*, p.3.

⁷⁹ A Whitehead, M Rossington, *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007) p.7.

⁸⁰ Anza Mehnert, 'Memory & Heritage', *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 65.3 (2011) 85-91, pp.85-86.

minds – the historical pageant, the public performance, the set-pattern event that was Commemoration Day.⁸¹ Paul Connerton describes the importance of such commemorative ideology at the beginning of a new group endeavour, to establish traditions and rituals which bring people together;⁸² physical acts in physical spaces, which the ‘archive of the feet,’ the body, the senses and the emotions recall long after.⁸³ The return visit itself also becomes part of the building of memory, as described by Berger and Niven:

Remembering – conjuring up stories, experiences and emotions form our past lives – is an active process...memory is a complex, fluid and contingent thing. Memories are formed by means of a neurological process in the brain but thereafter, as memories are accessed and narrated, they are subject to social influences.⁸⁴

Confidentiality and Ethics

All research was undertaken with the guidance of Bath Spa University’s ethics code. Although the oral history subjects granted permission for their information to be used, in a project in which it might be possible to cross-reference details, ethical considerations have, by necessity, overridden their individual permissions. Having consulted the University’s ethics committee, it was felt that a uniform anonymity of oral history subjects was necessary.

The Student Records held by the University have been used in order to understand the processes at work at Newton Park College under the leadership of Mary Dawson. These records remain confidential, and are held separately by the University; they are not part of the University Archive which provided the rest of the material used here. Although not a complete set of documents featuring every former student, the Student Records contain sufficient information to give an indication of the College intake, the interview process, and the formalities and procedures which took place. They also demonstrate the ongoing level of interest and support shown by Dawson in the longer-term development of her students. Dawson personally interviewed each one of the potential students, only occasionally deputising to other members of staff. If this was the case, she then met with her deputy to discuss each individual. She also wrote a testimonial

⁸¹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.41.

⁸² Connerton, *Societies*, p.6.

⁸³ Schama, *Landscape*, p. 24.

⁸⁴ Stefan Berger, Bill Niven, *Writing the History of Memory*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) p.89.

reference for each graduating student when their two years' training was complete. Many students stayed in touch with Dawson and the college, and additional references and testimonials were produced in succeeding years, for example for those seeking promotion or further career progression. The Student Records have been used in a general way, to indicate the tone and ethos of Dawson's approach rather than disclosing details of particular individuals; they are also used anonymously in line with the ongoing confidential nature of the documents.

Chapter 2

‘My opportune moment’¹: A Revolution in Education

The year 1944 was an important one in the history of Training Colleges because it saw the publication of the McNair Report. McNair gave proper recognition to the quality of the teacher as the cornerstone of educational development...It emphasised the importance of teacher training in any enlightened educational system...and made far-reaching proposals designed to raise their status, responsibility and autonomy.²

Mary Dawson wrote these words in 1967. At that point she was reflecting on the changes in teacher education which she had seen in her forty-year career, during a lifetime which spanned three quarters of the twentieth century. The McNair Report she cited as so important was part of the government’s preparatory research into education which informed the major change in the field, in the form of the 1944 Education Act. This was itself part of the wider social changes which occurred at that time, in the restructuring of health and welfare services and in response to wider social and economic change. In contextualising this thesis, rather than analysing the broader origins and evolution of national educational policy, this chapter focusses on the repercussions of the 1944 Act and the McNair Report, since these were the key documents to which Mary Dawson responded in her work at Newton Park. It also analyses the background of the post-war period, and the aims of the new teacher training colleges. It situates Newton Park College as one of a number of new institutions, established as part of a new regime. Mary Dawson was taking advantage of a particular time, place and cultural shift which she described as ‘revolutionary’, and which capitalised upon her own experience of twenty years in the teaching profession.³

A study of the period features a number of opposing themes. The peace of 1945 brought a mood of great optimism following the disruption and destruction of the

¹ Mary Dawson, *The History of the College*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive (uncatalogued).

² Mary Dawson *Twenty-two years in a College of Education*, p.2. The aims of the McNair Report (1944) were ‘To investigate the present sources of supply and the methods of recruitment and training of teachers and youth leaders and to report what principles should guide the Board in these matters in the future.’

³ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, *passim*.

war and yet the years which followed were increasingly overshadowed by apparent threats to that peace. It was a time of widening opportunity, yet has been perceived as a period in which those opportunities were limited by class and gender. Women were encouraged to become home makers amidst a chronic shortage of housing and at the same time, women were urged to remain in the workforce in order to assist economic recovery. Meanwhile, the birth-rate rose significantly whilst increasing numbers of women – greater than ever before – worked outside the home. The complexities and paradoxes of the period therefore present a number of strands for discourse. As a visual overlay to all of this, the availability of a vast supply of media in the form of magazines, television and film from that time overwhelm the popular consciousness, colouring our own perceptions and creating a strong image of the period. Both Todd and Beaumont discuss the pervading media representation of women and ‘the magazine image of the modern wife, devoted to her home and family, working happily in her labour-saving kitchen’ so heavily promoted by the consumer culture of the time. These images glamourised domesticity and present a vision of the era which has proved hard to shift.⁴ Those writing *during* the period emphasize the optimism of the peacetime society being created around them, particularly after the challenges of the war years.⁵ Gillard asserts that ‘wartime unity stirred the social conscience of the country and it was in this climate that ‘a passion for making social reconstruction plans seized the press, the politicians and the public.’⁶

The positives of the Welfare State legislation as outlined in the Beveridge Report of 1942, and the promised equalities of revolutionary educational reform all seemed unproblematic amidst the economic buoyancy of the 1950s. Secondary analysis written in the late 1960s and 1970s emphasised the strictures and

⁴ Caitriona Beaumont, ‘Women and Citizenship: A study of non-feminist women’s societies and the women’s movement in England 1928-1950’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1996) *passim*. Todd, *The People*, p.211. See also Melanie Bell, *Femininity in the Frame: Women & 1950s British Popular Cinema*, (London, I B Tauris, 2010). S Harper, V Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The decline of deference*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003); R Ritchie, *The housewife and the modern: the home and appearance in women’s magazines, 1954 – 1969*, (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2010). Alice Ferrebe, ‘Elizabeth Taylor’s uses of romance: Feminist feeling in 1950s English fiction’, *Literature and History*, Spring, 19.1 (2010) 50 – 65. Spencer, ‘Women’s Dilemmas’, *passim*.

⁵ For discussions and descriptions of the war to post-war transition and the optimism of the period, see Paul Addison, *Now the War is Over* (London: BBC Books, 1985). C J Bartlett, *A History of Post-war Britain 1945 – 1974* (New York: Longman, 1977). Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson, Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise!* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). Liz Heron, *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls growing up in the fifties*, (London: Virago, 1985).

⁶ Middleton and Weitzman, cited in Derek Gillard (2018) Education in England: available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history> <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/html> [Accessed 23.6.18].

gendered assumptions of the long 1950s, as well as the manner in which post-war idealisms had given way to the realities of grass roots application.⁷ More recently, deeper analysis and a revision of the period has uncovered the more nuanced reality for women, allowing those who experienced the post-war period to speak for themselves. Work by Spencer, Beaumont, Tinkler, McCarthy and others continues to bring these other realities to light, presenting fresh evidence about women in this complex period.⁸

The wartime coalition government had, during six years of conflict, forged ahead with several plans, including those for a welfare state; plans which had been announced in the Beveridge Report of 1942.⁹ The report stated that:

Each individual citizen is more likely to concentrate upon his war effort if he feels that his Government will be ready in time with plans for that better world; that, if these plans are to be ready in time, they must be made now.¹⁰

The report outlined the areas of social need which required reform, describing them as the 'Five Giants on the road to reconstruction.'¹¹ These were listed as Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness, and at a time when several 'revolutionary' changes to social policy were being proposed, this report was

⁷ Simon, Brian, 'The 1944 Education Act: A conservative measure?' *History of Education*, 15.1 (1986) 31-43. *passim*.

⁸ Using a combination of archival research, oral history or the study of specific groups of women, recent work in the area of the long 1950s has analysed women's experience. This work includes the following: Lynn Abrams, 'Liberating the female self: epiphanies, conflict and coherence in the life stories of post-war British women', *Social History*, 39.1 (2014) 14-35. Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives & Citizens: Domesticity & the Women's Movement in England 1928-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Caitriona Beaumont, 'What Do Women Want? Housewives Associations, Activism and Changing Representations of Women in the 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 147-162. Angela Davis, 'Belonging and 'Unbelonging': Jewish refugee and survivor women in 1950s Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 130-146. Sian Edwards, '"Nothing gets her goat!" The Farmer's Wife and the duality of Rural Femininity in the Young Farmer's Club Movement in 1950s Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 26-45. Claire Langhamer, 'Feelings, Women and Work in the long 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 77-92. Helen McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 46-61. Stephanie Spencer, 'Cosmopolitan Sociability in the British and International Federations of University Women: 1945-1960', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 93-109. Penny Tinkler, Stephanie Spencer, Claire Langhamer, 'Revisioning the History of Girls and Women in Britain in the long 1950s', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 1-8.

⁹ Bartlett, *Post-war Britain*, pp. 7, 8. Bartlett notes the influence that the Labour party were able to exert as part of the coalition government during the war.

¹⁰ *Notes on the Beveridge Report in brief*, London, HM Stationery Office, 1942, Margaret Harvey Collection, BSU Collection, uncatalogued, p.60.

¹¹ Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A biography of the Welfare State*, 2nd Edition, (London: Harper Collins, 2001) *passim*. *Notes on the Beveridge Report*, p.5. Pat Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (2nd Edition), (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 1996).

recognised as ambitious and far reaching.¹² Describing the boldness of the plan, Sir William Beveridge stated within the pages of his report that:

Now, when the war is abolishing landmarks of every kind, is the opportunity for using experience in a clear field. A revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolutions, not for patching.¹³

The report, or specifically an abbreviated version of Beveridge's words, was widely distributed and read at home, as well as by servicemen and women still on active duty overseas.¹⁴ This served to heighten interest in, and enthusiasm for, the social changes to come. Lawson and Silver state that the plans provided a 'sense of solidarity in a nation under stress.'¹⁵ Selina Todd cites a serviceman, who in 1942 declared that 'we all thought that a new revolution was about to begin, or happen. 'From cradle to grave'...it was a wonderful expression.'¹⁶ The report outlined the plans that the wartime coalition government intended to carry through for the sake of the country's future, and its proposals to address the social inequalities of previous eras.¹⁷ These were particularly supported by the Labour representatives in the coalition government, who sought to promote ideas of community and popular participation.¹⁸ Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo assert that it was the Labour Party's belief that '[people] must be drawn together and thus reminded of their common humanity and deeper purpose' in order to effect such far-reaching legislation.¹⁹ The war, they felt, presented a great opportunity for a social revolution that would allay the public fears of a return to pre-war conditions of mass unemployment. In the new plans, the idea that everyone would contribute and everyone would, in turn benefit from the new welfare regime, contributed to the whole postwar feeling of unity and joint endeavour, which would continue to carry many through the period of transition from war to peace.²⁰ Sked and Cook state that 'to believe in Beveridge was to have faith in a successful outcome to the

¹² *Notes on the Beveridge Report*, p.4; Thane, *Welfare State*, *passim*; Harold Silver (ed) *Equal Opportunity in Education: A reader in Social Class and educational opportunity* (London Methuen 1973), p.24.

¹³ *Notes on the Beveridge Report*, p.4.

¹⁴ Todd, *The People*, pp. 140, 142, 143.

¹⁵ Lawson; Silver, *A Social History*, p.415.

¹⁶ Todd, *The People*, p. 140.

¹⁷ Bartlett, *Post-war Britain*, pp.7,8.

¹⁸ Fielding *et al*, *England Arise!*, p.128.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.102.

²⁰ Brown *et al*, p.36; Kenneth O Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945 -1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.45.

war...to have faith in a successful distribution of the spoils of victory.'²¹ Todd cites the appeal of a 'collective effort for collective gain' which prevailed, with 'better social welfare as a reward for the exhaustion, effort and loss that the people had endured.'²² This idea of collective gain features strongly in the language of the report, and became familiar to many when it was made widely available:

Freedom from want cannot be forced on a democracy or given to a democracy. It must be won by them. Winning it needs courage and faith and a sense of national unity: courage to face facts and difficulties and to overcome them; faith in our future and in the ideals of fair-play and freedom...a sense of national identity overriding the interests of any class or section. The Plan for Social Security in this Report is submitted by one who believes that in this supreme crisis the British people will not be found wanting, of courage, faith and national unity, of material and spiritual power to play their part in achieving both social security and the victory of justice among nations upon which security depends.²³

An important part of the Beveridge package which contributed to the 'fever of optimism' and 'limitless possibilities' was embodied in the 1944 Education Act, which sought to remould education in as revolutionary a way as Beveridge proposed for welfare.²⁴ R.A Butler's 1943 White Paper 'Educational Reconstruction' stated that 'it will be possible to fit the schemes for educational reform, into the general picture of social reconstruction.'²⁵

The act in its final version was however less radical than it might have been, since the original brief looked into the very existence of the public schools as well the role of the church in state education, in addition to the two areas which became part of the actual legislation – the arrangements for secondary schools and the raising of the school leaving age.²⁶ Gradually, as a result of further papers, committees and reports, the more radical proposals, seen as too divisive at a time of national emergency, failed to appear in the final piece of legislation. Simon

²¹ Sked, Cook, *Post-war Britain*, p.19.

²² Todd, *The People*, p.147.

²³ *Notes on the Beveridge Report*, p.62.

²⁴ Heron, *Truth, Dare or Promise*, p.2; Morgan, *Labour in Power*, p.174.

²⁵ Butler, R. A. *Educational Reconstruction*, (1943), available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/wp1943/educational-reconstruction.html> [Accessed 24.5.18] paragraph 5.

²⁶ D Gillard (2018) Education in England: a history www.educationengland.org.uk/history
<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/html>.

makes the point that 'two of the four basic issues in the radical programme were successfully evaded, defused or marginalised.'²⁷ However, as Dent states:

There is a tendency in some sophisticated quarters to look down the nose at the Education Act, 1944, to regard it as a rather feeble middle-class compromise which has not altered anything very much. Nothing could be farther from the truth.²⁸

Gillard asserts that 'The 1944 Act was undoubtedly an enormous achievement - all the more remarkable for having been conceived in the depths of a horrific world war. Building on previous education acts, it effectively created an entire system of educational provision and administration.'²⁹

Butler's White Paper asserted that 'upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends,'³⁰ a statement which echoes the ambitiousness of the plans. The nation would be provided with:

secondary education, of diversified types but of equal standing....[and] the standard of accommodation and amenities will be steadily raised to the level of the best examples. For the younger children, at the primary stage the large classes and bad conditions which at present, are a reproach to many elementary schools, will be systematically eliminated.³¹

The educational change which came about may have been the result of political manoeuvrings and compromise but nonetheless, to those in the educational field like Mary Dawson, what was left of the original proposals still provided new opportunities, by providing the College at which she could put her own philosophy into practice.³² In particular the identification of the primary years as a separate phase in children's education aligned with the views espoused in women's colleges such as Whitelands and Brighton, which also identified the unique nature

²⁷ Simon, *Conservative Measure*, p.41.

²⁸ H. C. Dent, 'To Cover the Country with Good Schools: A Century's Effort', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 19.2 (1971), 125 – 138. p.134.

²⁹ Gillard D (2018) Education in England: a history available from www.educationengland.org.uk/history <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/html> [Accessed 23.6.18].

³⁰ Butler, R. A. *Educational Reconstruction*, (1943), available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/wp1943/educational-reconstruction.html> [Accessed 24.5.18].

³¹ Butler, *Educational Reconstruction*, paragraph 2.

³² Simon, *Conservative Measure*, pp.43, 44.

of the primary phase as a period for engagement in progressive, child-centred and holistic learning.³³

The resulting legislation, embodied in the 1944 Education Act made new provision for the overhaul of the educational field, and the new primary and secondary school structure. Alongside the act, the McNair committee researched and reported on 'Teachers and Youth Leaders', their supply, recruitment and training.³⁴ The issues it identified were published in the McNair Report of 1944, which made recommendations for the modifications required if the profession was to grow as required under the demands of the new legislation.

The atmosphere of change, with its attendant sense of optimism, epitomises the immediate post-war period, and helps to contextualise the founding of new enterprises such as Newton Park College. It is also important to note that the ideas for educational reform embodied in the 1944 Education Act and the recommendations of the McNair committee were not only the result of social change in the wake of war, but rather the outcome of many years of planning in the interwar period. Despite the perception that it was the dislocation of war itself which precipitated this 'revolutionary change'³⁵, Harold Smith asserts that this overlooks the longer continuities in society.³⁶ Far from being the war that triggered new thinking, the changes which took place to education in particular, had roots in pre-war research, merely put into action in the late 1940s. Those changes were enabled by wartime systems, processes and the residual feeling of national endeavour.³⁷ Broad political agreement from the wartime coalition government resulted in a desire for change to emerge once hostilities ceased. The resulting consensus was sufficient for the still ambitious plans for reform to pass into legislation. Halsey and Webb describe 1944 as 'one of few periods of clear consensus about aims or support for radical proposals for the way ahead' in the twentieth century overall.³⁸

³³ Mary Dawson, *Twenty-one years in a College of Education*, 2 page document, 1967.

³⁴ Gillard, *The McNair Report*, available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/mcnair/mcnair1944.html> [Accessed 27.6.18]

³⁵ Addison, *War is Over*, pp. 1-25.

³⁶ Harold M Smith, *War & Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) *passim*. Smith discusses the ways in which war is assumed to lead to social change, and the reality that such major events precipitate or crystalize change already taking place; a pattern which can be traced back many centuries.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.2.

³⁸ A H Halsey, Josephine Webb, *Twentieth Century British Social Trends* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 2000) p.179.

From the beginnings of compulsory state education with the 1870 Elementary Education Act, much debate and enquiry had taken place into educational methods, provision and outcomes. State elementary education provided the mass of the population's children with a basic education up to the age of eleven, which was extended to fourteen after the 1918 Education Act. Mary Dawson described the system as 'planned rather like a factory of the same period, to turn out finished articles as quickly and cheaply as possible...mass production methods were popular, and cheapness was the first consideration.'³⁹ This cheapness also applied to the elementary school teachers, and from 1870 women began to outnumber men in the role as they could be paid less and were cheaper to train. The conditions in their colleges were also poor. Keating notes the 'vast chasm in prestige' between teachers in elementary and secondary schools, where fees were paid. Those teachers employed in the secondary schools were not formally trained in teaching methods, since a degree in their chosen subject was considered a sufficient qualification for the role.⁴⁰ Other methods to reduce costs included the pupil-teacher scheme and the payment by results system, both of which limited the effectiveness of education by constraining teacher behaviour. In 1911 the 'Pledge' system was introduced, whereby trainees agreed to work for a certain number of years in maintained schools in exchange for grants to cover their studies. This method had the advantage of allowing poorer students to gain qualifications.⁴¹ Many of these anomalies were still being discussed throughout the interwar period and as part of the post-war legislation - Simon states that 'one of the advantages of the 1944 reforms was that it 'would bring elementary education, till now hived off as a separate system for the mass of the working class, into the mainstream of a reconstructed system.'⁴²

The 1920s and 1930s had seen an increase in educational research – by government appointed committees as well as amongst educators – in order to better understand the needs of schools, pupils, teachers and the kind of workforce the nation required;⁴³ there was a particular need for expertise in the fields of

³⁹ Mary Dawson, *Speech, West Twerton Girls' School Prize Giving*, 21st October 1948, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive (uncatalogued).

⁴⁰ Jenny Keating, *Teacher Education up to the 1960s*, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, (2010), available from <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/project-papers/topics.html> [Accessed 23.5.18].

⁴¹ Keating, *Teacher Education*, p.2.

⁴² Simon, *Conservative Measure*, p.35.

⁴³ D Gillard, (2006) *The Hadow Reports: an introduction* available from www.educationengland.org.uk/articles/24hadow.html [Accessed 25.5.14].

science, engineering, and technical training.⁴⁴ Between 1923 and 1933 the Hadow Committees researched and produced a series of reports relating to the educational provision of all age groups, from young children to the adolescent.⁴⁵ Their brief was to conduct ‘fundamental inquiries into the organisation and content of education in school.’⁴⁶ The Hadow reports’ progressive viewpoint was to influence the educational agenda for many decades, and its ideas about child-centred education were still being echoed through the Plowden Report of 1967.⁴⁷ The reports of the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the framework and thinking behind the 1944 Education Act, in which a proposed a new regime would be established for the under elevens, alongside a secondary education system for all children over the age of eleven.⁴⁸ Formerly, education beyond elementary school was available only on payment of fees, with varying levels of scholarship available to those who could not afford to pay. Todd estimates that this amounted to just 14% of elementary school pupils,⁴⁹ who were given the chance to enter secondary schools through a limited scheme of local council scholarships, a situation described by Dent as ‘a grave inadequacy’.⁵⁰ The 1944 Act, then, aimed to provide secondary education for all, and by doing so, increase the educational opportunities and outcomes for the nation, and for the generations emerging from the Second World War. The aim was to encourage the next generation of thinkers, to develop new technologies and provide the active citizens for the modern world – a vision as well as a practical expediency, since there was also the fear of being left behind by nations who had moved ahead in terms of the education of its young:

By the late 1930s it was becoming clear that England's class-divided secondary schools were failing the nation's children. Twice as many students were going on to higher education in Germany, more than twice as

⁴⁴ Bartlett, *Post-war Britain*, p.11.

⁴⁵ *The Hadow Report Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls*, Report of the Consultative Committee London: HMSO (1923). *The Hadow Report: Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity*, Report of the Consultative Committee London: HMSO (1924). *The Hadow Report: The Education of the Adolescent*, Report of the Consultative Committee London: HMSO (1926). *The Hadow Report: Books in Public Elementary Schools*, Report of the Consultative Committee London: HMSO (1928). *The Hadow Report: The Primary School*, Report of the Consultative Committee London: HMSO (1931). *The Hadow Report: Infant and Nursery Schools*, Report of the Consultative Committee London: HMSO (1933), available from www.educationengland.org.uk/articles/24hadow.html [Accessed 25.5.14].

⁴⁶ Joan D Browne, *Teachers of Teachers: A history of the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979). p.16.

⁴⁷ *The Hadow Report* stated, ‘The curriculum of the Primary School must be thought of in terms of activity and experience, rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored’ (Hadow, 1931, paragraph 75).

⁴⁸ Simon, *Conservative Measure*, p.32.

⁴⁹ Todd, *The People*, p.216.

⁵⁰ Dent, *Education Act*, p.15.

many in France, over three times as many in Switzerland, and almost ten times as many in the US.⁵¹

Lawson and Silver affirm that ‘the educational reforms which were to take effect from 1945 were intended to remove some of the stigmas attached to lower-class education, provide new patterns of opportunity and set education in a framework of improved welfare and social justice.’⁵² However, the utopian ideals and child-centred theories behind the educational reforms of the 1940s are now largely forgotten, and discourse is dominated by condemnation of what became a divisive system. Educators such as Mary Dawson had welcomed the changes, seeing them as more positively focused on outcomes for the individual child. R.A. Butler, President of the Board of Education and the author of the 1944 act stated that its effect ‘will be as much social as educational. I think it will have the effect of welding us all into one nation.’⁵³

Educational discussion and theory at the time centred on the best ways to educate children and young people for the modern world, to be better educated workers and active citizens. Dyhouse states that it also allowed many to seek ‘an education...as an avenue to individual self-improvement, a share of what had hitherto belonged only to the few.’⁵⁴ The state took on the responsibility to educate all its young people up to the age of fifteen, in order to benefit the country in its post-war economic recovery. By increasing numbers in the teaching profession it provided training and employment, as well as providing opportunities for those returning from war service. The theoretical research being carried out alongside educational planning for the future had paved the way for the more holistic approach to young children’s learning, an approach which would continue to be explored until the end of the twentieth century. Gillard affirms the progressive thrust of the Hadow reports: for example, the report entitled *The Primary School* (1931) argues that ‘a good school is not a place of compulsory instruction, but a community of old and young, engaged in learning by cooperative experiment.’⁵⁵ In a statement which echoes the holistic educational theories of Friedrich Froebel,

⁵¹ D Gillard, *The Spens Report* (1938) available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/spens/> [Accessed 7.9.14].

⁵² Lawson; Silver, *A Social History*, p.421.

⁵³ Timmins, *The Five Giants*, p.224.

⁵⁴ Dyhouse, *Students*, *passim*.

⁵⁵ Gillard, D, *The Hadow Reports: an introduction*, available from www.educationengland.org.uk/articles/24hadow.html (2006) [Accessed 25.5.14].

Hadow asserted that 'primary school should be thought of in terms of activity and experience, rather than knowledge and facts.'⁵⁶ These were the progressive theories which Mary Dawson had practised in her career as teacher and then teacher trainer, and were certainly the prevailing philosophy of the more enlightened teachers and teacher training colleges of the period. Dawson's experiences in her early career, which will be explored in Chapter 3, resonated with the findings of the Hadow Committee, which observed much school practice still heavily reliant on rote learning and the 'payment by results' attitude of a former time. Dawson would later describe the schools and colleges of her own experience, stating that:

Considerable tension was caused in schools between the majority of teachers trained in outworn classroom methods with roots in the monitorial system and payment by results, and the new generation of pioneer teachers, often Froebelians, who believed in the child-centred school and in activity and project methods.⁵⁷

Dent notes, in reference to the colleges of the period, that:

Not even the blackest economic depression could halt the flow of ideas or check the spread of experiments – by L.E.A.s as well as individual schools and teachers – aimed at putting into practice the new ideals teachers were pursuing: Activity, Freedom, Child-centred education. During the early 1920s there occurred a great leap forward, in methodology and, infinitely more important, in the relationship between teacher and taught; from one of mutual suspicion and antagonism to friendship, trust, and joyous co-operation. True, this was for years a minority movement; but much of its spirit was manifest in the first 'Hadow' report, on *The Education of the Adolescent*, and more in that on *The Primary School*.⁵⁸

Dawson further states that the Hadow Report *The Primary School* (1931), described the kind of practice that she had observed in her career to date, and that:

It fired an enthusiasm for education that never left me. Formerly my experience would have led me to agree with Helvetius, the 18th century Swiss thinker, when he said 'Men are born ignorant but not stupid. It is education which makes them stupid'. Suddenly I understood the true

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.5.

⁵⁸ Dent, *To Cover the Country*, p.131.

meaning of education and I determined to change my role from that of teaching History to that of being an Education Tutor.⁵⁹

For a nation moving forward in the aftermath of depression and war, the desired changes to education not only encompassed a holistic educational theory, but also a fairer attitude, expressed in access to free education which Kevin Jeffreys calls 'the victory for the common child'.⁶⁰ The changes presented in the 1944 Education Act heralded secondary schooling for all children up to the age of fifteen, and included distinctive and separate systems of primary and secondary schools with a clear division at age eleven. This meant an urgent requirement for effective and appropriately trained teachers, to meet the numbers required, as well as to meet the need for more specialised training for the different age groups. In Churchill's words, education was to be both 'greatly improved and prolonged' – an expensive commitment, but one which would result in succeeding generations who would accept secondary education as a right.⁶¹ The newly elected Labour government of 1945 would have oversight of the range of new welfare legislation, with Ellen Wilkinson in the newly established role of Minister of Education.⁶² She believed passionately that 'achieving equal opportunity relied on education being tailored to each child's talents'.⁶³ For a society which required a range of skills as it attempted to rebuild after war, this was a message which tapped into the prevailing mood and which was translated for practical purposes into the new system of technical, grammar and secondary modern schools, in which 'no boy or girl is debarred by lack of means'.⁶⁴ This was 'the meritocratic impulse' which fitted the prevailing mood 'and the ideals generated by the building of the "New Jerusalem" for the post-war world'.⁶⁵ The three kinds of schools were supposed to be able to bring out the best in their pupils. Children's destination school would be decided at the age of eleven, but there was intended to be free movement between the different

⁵⁹ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.5.

⁶⁰ Jeffreys, Kevin, *War & Reform: British Politics during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) p.10.

⁶¹ Morgan, *Labour in Power*, p.174.

⁶² Ellen Wilkinson is another example of Mary Dawson's generation of women with public roles. University educated and from a modest background, she trained and worked as a teacher before becoming involved with women's suffrage and trade unions, becoming a Labour Member of Parliament in 1924. She was the first Minister of Education and oversaw the implementation of the 1944 Education Act.

⁶³ Todd, *The People*, p.216.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.217.

⁶⁵ Stephanie Spencer, 'Reflections on the 'Site of Struggle': girls' experience of secondary education in the late 1950s', *History of Education*, 33.4 (2004) 437-449, p.438.

types of school to allow for differing rates of development. Individuals should be able to move schools without restriction should it prove desirable for the pupil. In addition, it was envisaged that equality of opportunity and equal recognition of aptitude would exist for teachers as well as their pupils. The Norwood Report (1943) which had investigated the possibilities of the three-school system, was anxious not to make the division at eleven-plus rigid. The schools should have 'such parity as amenities and conditions can bestow' and from 'one type of education to another there should be ease of transfer, particularly, though not exclusively, in the early stages, for the transition from primary to secondary education is not a break but a process'. It was proposed that two years after transition from primary to secondary school, the performance of children should be 'sympathetically and skilfully reviewed'.⁶⁶

But parity of esteem between types of schools did not happen as planned; it would be economic reality that let down the theory.⁶⁷ McCulloch affirms that ultimately, most Local Education Authorities opted for a bi-partite system, which served to further highlight the differences in provision.⁶⁸ From the beginning, schools were not as equally funded as intended, there was little movement for pupils between schools as planned, aptitude tests at age eleven were deeply flawed, and teachers' prospects differed greatly across the sector. In a country trying to change many things at once, economic reality and a degree of intransigence on the part of some schools tore into, highlighted, and exposed the new education system's flaws.

In addition to the promise of secondary education for all, the existing elementary schools would be replaced by a two-tier primary system, which required separate provision for infants and juniors, while a secondary sector would cater for the needs of children aged eleven to fifteen. Each age group would be taught their own curriculum, under a separate system.⁶⁹ Moreover, secondary education would be free, thus providing educational opportunities for a generation of young people who had previously been forced to make the harsh choice between the worlds of work or school; not everyone was in a position to afford a secondary education before the war. In his book describing the act, Harold Dent stated 'It is a very great

⁶⁶ The Norwood Report (1943), cited in Timmins, *The Five Giants*, p.88.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gary McCulloch, 'Local Education Authorities and the organisation of secondary education 1943-1950', *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2 (2002) 235-243. p.237.

⁶⁹ Hunt, *Lessons for Life*, p.xix.

Act, which makes possible as important and substantial an advance in public education as the country has ever known.⁷⁰ Mary Dawson also reflected the mood of the time in describing the 1944 Education Act as:

the greatest and most revolutionary of its age...it laid down that every child should have Secondary Education and that this education should be suited to age, ability and aptitudes...it is this sentence alone which makes the act revolutionary...the revolution consists in the fact that, for the first time, the state recognises that the school should fit the child's needs instead of the child conforming to the needs of the school. The school is to be child-centred.⁷¹

For this educational transformation to be successful, a vast expansion in teacher numbers would be required. In his analysis of the new education system, Dent estimated that number at 50,000.⁷² The McNair Report had analysed the state of teacher training colleges and the teachers they produced, and made a series of recommendations to improve provision. The education system was to be altered in a way that educators like Mary Dawson could embrace; the requirement was for educators and teacher trainers who understood the needs of children and who had developed a training philosophy which supported this. However, the committee's report failed to identify many of the developments which were already taking place in the most progressive women's training colleges. One such establishment was Whitelands College, where Dawson was employed from 1938 until 1945, and which taught Froebelian theories of experiential learning.⁷³ In this failure McNair overlooked much of the good work being done by educators like Dawson, her colleagues and her peers. It was for this reason that she saw the McNair Report as both a challenge and an opportunity.

The McNair Report was published towards the end of 1944. Mary Dawson would later often quote the report and its findings as a catalyst for much of her own thinking, specifically in her determination to prove the central importance of the teacher training in which she was engaged. Her own summation of her career,

⁷⁰ Dent, *Education Act*, p.3. Dent was editor of the Times Educational Supplement, and wrote his book 'to help members of the general public to play their part in making a great Education Act a great success.'

⁷¹ Mary Dawson, *Speech, West Twerton Girls' School Prize Giving*, 21st October 1948.

Mary Dawson was an advocate of child centred learning which started with the needs of the child, in contrast to the results-driven methods she had witnessed early on in her career. The former was the progressive style of education taught in institutions like Whitelands, and was influenced by educational theorists such as Froebel and Pestalozzi. Note that this speech was delivered just four years after the act was passed, and has strong tones of Dawson's self-confessed idealism.

⁷² Dent, *Education Act*, p.17.

⁷³ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.6.

written in 1968, was entitled *Twenty-two years in a College of Education* and carried the subtitle *A College of Education since the McNair Report*. Such was its importance in galvanising her career and actions.⁷⁴

The report was instrumental in promoting and advancing a number of changes in the sector which had been discussed for many years. Most notable of these was the removal of the marriage bar amongst women teachers. That much was positive. But it was also damning of much of the existing provision in women's teacher training colleges. Prior to 1944, these women-only colleges largely trained teachers for the elementary schools, whilst the majority of secondary school teachers qualified within universities. The teacher training colleges were therefore seen as inferior, and elementary education of less importance. This was the broad pattern, but of course there was considerable crossover, and many university-trained teachers taught in the elementary schools. The real issue was the significant difference in funding, reputation and perception between the training colleges and the university departments of education; closing the gap between them would be a central issue over the long 1950s.⁷⁵ Mary Dawson was a teacher trainer who recognised that the training of all teachers needed to be robust and effective, irrespective of where it was delivered. It was notable that the Hadow committee of the interwar period had reported on every stage of a child's life and education, from nursery age to adolescence. This in turn identified the importance of the teacher in every age group, encouraging equal recognition and promotion of their role, wherever delivered.

In its critique of the pre-war teacher training colleges, McNair stated that:

The purpose of the training colleges has always been the preparation of teachers for the elementary schools; and the trail of cheapness...which has dogged the elementary schools has also cast its spell over the training colleges which prepare teachers for them. What is chiefly wrong with the majority of the training colleges is their poverty and all that flows from it.⁷⁶

This 'poverty', the committee believed, affected every part of the training college mentality, and by implication produced poor teachers. They further outlined

⁷⁴ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*. The year before, Dawson had laid out the original ideas for this publication in the two-page document *Twenty-one years in a College of Education*.

⁷⁵ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, *passim*.

⁷⁶ *The McNair Report: Teachers and Youth Leaders*, (London: HMSO, 1944), available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/mcnair/mcnair1944.html> (Accessed 13.5.15)

'isolation, introversion and a research-averse outlook', identifying poverty of aspiration as much as the more basic lack of resources caused by underfunding. Such negativity was deeply offensive to many involved in the training establishments, especially the more progressive or experimental ones, whose staff aspired to improvements in the sector and greater recognition of the work they were already embarked upon.⁷⁷ College principals such as Lilian de Lissa at Gypsy Hill Training College had been involved in research for many years. Whitehead affirms that de Lissa's work in the promotion of nursery teaching, along with her recommendation of a more specialised and longer training programme, anticipated the similar recommendations of the McNair report by some years.⁷⁸ Women such as de Lissa were among a significant group of principals; outward looking, research minded individuals already engaged in influential practice. Lillian de Lissa's work at Gypsy Hill College resonates with that of Mary Dawson. Both had worked and trained in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, and held senior positions in nationally renowned training colleges.

The McNair committee was advised by many groups and individuals in the educational field during the course of their research, gathering evidence from across the educational field. Their comments about the poverty of the training colleges dominated the ensuing discourse. Mary Dawson, writing near the end of her career, addressed this issue, asserting that:

There is a widely held view that before the McNair Report the training colleges lived in the dark ages, and that after its publication all began to be sweetness and light. This is far from the truth. The McNair Report is an historic landmark, which summed up years of reforming thought.⁷⁹ The period between the wars was one of intense vitality and activity amongst progressive educational thinkers, and this was reflected in the more enlightened colleges.⁸⁰

McNair was also negative about the idea that teachers with certain specialisms were being taught separately – another negative accusation aimed at training colleges like Gypsy Hill, with dedicated courses for nursery teachers. The report stated:

⁷⁷ Whitehead, 'Contesting McNair' p.507.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.509.

⁷⁹ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

We wish...to say quite clearly that those who are seeking to become qualified teachers of children of nursery school age should on no account be segregated during training from those who are being prepared to teach older children. We recognise that there is a body of special knowledge and that there are special practices which teachers of very young children must acquire during training. But there is also a type of knowledge and a range of experience which are the common need of all teachers, and these should be obtained in common. Any tendency to segregate those intended for a particular type of school does no good to the children concerned and is definitely harmful to students while they are training and to teachers when they are qualified. If women seeking work in nursery schools receive their training in isolation they will in the long run lose rather than gain status.⁸¹

The women's colleges in this mould were typified as environments of genteel femininity in which ideas of cultural reproduction were demonstrated through conformity with middle class values.⁸² It was colleges in this mould, perhaps, that drew the attention of the McNair committee, and which simultaneously challenged, influenced and inspired Mary Dawson in her career at Newton Park. She was challenged to improve teacher training provision, influenced by the bad practice she had observed in her own experience, and inspired by the good work she had seen being carried out in the more progressive colleges like Whitelands and Gypsy Hill. In citing the influence of McNair she focused on 'proper recognition' of the teaching profession, the 'quality of the teacher', 'the importance of teacher training in any enlightened educational system' and the challenge to 'raise their status, responsibility and autonomy.'⁸³ The challenge laid down before educators like Dawson involved boldly embracing all the negativity the McNair report embodied and proving the greater worth of the colleges – most especially her own – by demonstrating their effectiveness and impact. She did this as an active member of the ATCDE, as a researcher, as a member of the Institute of Education at the University of Bristol, and as Principal. Dawson was the antithesis of the 'isolated, remote' training college principal caricatured in the McNair report; her tenacity and strength of character ensured the College's survival through the early

⁸¹ *McNair Report*, Point 487, p.133.

⁸² The dominant atmosphere of femininity in the women's colleges is fully explored in Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2001). Elizabeth Edwards, 'Women Principals 1900 - 1960: Gender & Power', *History of Education*, 29.5 (2000) 405 – 414.

⁸³ Mary Dawson, *The History of the College*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive (uncatalogued).

stages of development, and subsequent growth in the years which followed.⁸⁴ In a speech of 1955, she stated:

Everyone today realises the tremendous importance of the Training Colleges. The extraordinary thing is that it is only in the last fifteen years that their importance has been generally recognised. For one hundred years before the Second World War, they suffered from a tradition of penury, and from a lack of status which was reflected in the whole attitude of the public towards elementary education. The changed attitude to the colleges, and the growing realisation of their significance shows itself in the McNair Report of 1944, a far-sighted and courageous document, designed to put teacher-training in its proper place in the educational system of the country...the fluid situation made it a particularly good time in which to reorganise.⁸⁵

Dawson remained a proponent and champion of teacher training colleges throughout her career, during which she witnessed changes in perception of the work and status of these colleges, as well as their growth and development towards university standards. Despite remaining the poorer relation for some time, the Colleges of Education were a crucial part of the expansion of higher education which followed in the 1960s and 1970s. This theme will be further explored in Chapter 6.

The great challenge of the post-war era was to train the vast numbers of teachers required, and the McNair committee considered the demands of the proposed new education system from every angle. Its final report identified three main targets. First, that 'the field of recruitment must be widened'; second, that 'conditions of service which deter people from becoming teachers must be abolished', which meant the lifting of the marriage bar, and lastly that 'the standing of education must be improved so that a sufficient number of men and women of quality will be attracted to teaching as a profession.'⁸⁶ The committee considered that on the whole, teaching was generally held in low regard, and identified that a new level of professionalism and pride was needed immediately, as well as in the longer term, in order to carry the 1944 act forward effectively.

⁸⁴ City of Bath Council, Minutes of Meetings, 1946 – 1968, Bath Spa University Archive, (BSU/7/1). Newton Park College, Minutes of Meetings, 1946 – 1968 Bath Spa University Archive, (BSU/2/2/78 – 80).

⁸⁵ Mary Dawson, Speech, Headteachers' Study Group, Street, Somerset, 2^{8th} February 1955.

⁸⁶ McNair Report, *Future Supply of Teachers*, section 59, p.18.

A further issue associated with the perceived poverty of training colleges was identified in their accommodation and provision of facilities.⁸⁷ Any new establishments to be created in the wake of the act would ideally be provided with better buildings and equipment, and should plan for growth. Many institutions were small, under-equipped and therefore limited by their means. McNair concluded that colleges with inadequate accommodation, poor library provision and lack of lecture and assembly space, could not be considered as adequate, and such criticism therefore demonstrated the view that a good college should have all these things in place if it were to flourish and build its reputation. At Newton Park, Dawson's attempts to provide adequate facilities for her students were hampered from the start, and her dogged refusal to accept second best is apparent. She was called upon to negotiate both local implementation and national legislation. Given the strictures of post-war shortages, she fought on a number of fronts simultaneously; for new buildings, equipment, books, her choice of staff, adequate accommodation for teaching and billeting - in fact, as she said, 'every blessed thing.'⁸⁸ McNair encouraged ambitious women's teacher training colleges like Newton Park; not only did Dawson secure the future of her students, but she also met the challenges laid down by the report.

It was also recognised in the report that attitudes towards the teaching profession affected the trainee, the qualified teacher, the pupils they taught and the staff they worked amongst. The McNair recommendations identified the need for the profession to be attractive as a career at all levels, stating:

Many pupils who leave school at or before 16 years of age for lack of any objective would remain until 17 or 18 if, without in any way being required to commit themselves, the teaching profession were attractively presented as a possibility for them. It could not, however, honestly be so presented unless it were in fact attractive; and it can only be attractively presented with sincerity by teachers who themselves find in it a satisfying career. Quite apart, however, from the claims and opportunities of the teaching profession there is something to be said for not regarding a school as efficient unless it shows by its yearly practice that it takes special care of its pupils in relation to their future occupations. The school should be a socially responsible institution.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Tropp, *School Teachers*, p.247.

⁸⁸ Mary Dawson, *letter to Hannah Lawrance*, 19th January 1946, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa Library Archive (uncatalogued).

⁸⁹ McNair Report, p.20.

Former students of Newton Park, who had been children during the years following McNair, confirm that teaching as a profession was heavily promoted by their own schools. This can be seen as exemplifying the limitations on women in the post-war period, but this active promotion of teaching as a career can also be interpreted in a number of other ways. Primarily, it represents the profession promoting itself, demonstrating that the committee's proposals in this area were being carried through. It identifies teaching as an expanding sector, with all the career opportunities and prospects this represents. It also suggests that those recommending teaching recognised their own agency and the independence they had enjoyed as a result of their own choice of career. In addition, in specific cases it shows that Newton Park was endorsed through personal knowledge of the reputation of the college, its work and its Principal. Former students recall their own schools' influence in their decision, one stating that her headmistress 'had a list of Teacher Training Colleges of which she approved and I believe Newton Park was top of the list.'⁹⁰ Another states that:

Once I decided that I wanted to be a teacher, I discussed it with one or two teachers at school and they guided me into applying for Newton Park because it was held to be a college of high repute and that to get a place here, would be a privilege.⁹¹

One of the most limiting conditions for women in the teaching profession between the wars was the existence of the marriage bar. Brought in as a result of male unemployment in the 1920s as a means to protect men's roles in a depressed jobs market, it had become common practice but was by no means nationally applied. It meant that a woman teacher could be compelled to give up her career upon marriage, and as a result led to the profession's domination by single women in the interwar period. But the application of the bar remained the judgement of individual authorities. The McNair committee's findings went into great detail about the operation of the marriage bar, examining its application across local authorities, as well as the many problems this haphazardness created. The committee's opinion was that women teachers, who formed the bulk of the profession, were unfairly penalised by being forced to resign upon marriage. Their domination also rendered the training colleges a single women's environment. In

⁹⁰ Helen, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

⁹¹ Jo, female student, 1954-56. Oral testimony.

the interwar period, the trope of the unmarried woman teacher became a familiar one, and was the subject of much analysis in the media, in literature and in intellectual discourse.⁹² Under the prevailing psychology of the time, being unmarried was seen as constraining, unnatural and the antithesis of a full and rewarding existence:

One aspect of this narrow life is the requirement, where it exists, that women teachers shall resign on marriage. This requirement rests on no legal obligation. Local education authorities and governing bodies of schools have discretion in this as in many other matters. Practice varies, therefore, from area to area...There is no doubt that current practice tends to stamp the profession as being, for women, a celibate profession. This deters young women...In short, the marriage bar depresses recruitment.⁹³

The report went on to discuss the advantages associated with the presence in schools of married women, those who were parents themselves, and the associated benefits of having positive role models for schoolchildren of both genders. As it bluntly stated:

to debar married women from work in the schools is patently contrary to common sense...our view is simply this: that if a married woman has the time and inclination to teach, the choice whether she pursues that inclination or not should rest with her.⁹⁴

⁹² The following all include reflections on the position of the never-married women teachers of the interwar period, and her centrality to education and to the progress towards emancipation: Mary Cathcart Borer, *Willingly to School: A history of Women's Education* (Guildford: Lutterworth Press, 1975). Eileen M Byrne, *Women & Education*, (London: Tavistock, 1978). Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001). Mary Hilton, Pam Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2000). Katherine Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). Gerry Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain since 1840*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005). Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (London: Bodley Head, 1934). Felicity Hunt, *Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls & Women 1850-1950*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). Louise Morley, Val Walsh, *Breaking Boundaries: Women in Higher Education*, (London, Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1996). Oram's seminal work on women teacher's contribution to the emancipation process has been key to understanding the early career and motivations of Mary Dawson: Alison Oram, *Women Teachers & Feminist Politics 1900-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). Carrie Paechter, *Educating the Other: Gender, Power & Schooling* (London: The Falmer Press, 1998). Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1992). June Purvis, *A History of Women's Education* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991) June Purvis, *Women's History Britain 1850-1945: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1995). Dorothy L Sayers, *Are Women Human? Essays 1938* (Grand Rapids: Erdmann's Publishing, Michigan, 1971). The Lesbian History Group, *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985*, (London: The Women's Press, 1989). Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in 20th century Britain*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001).

⁹³ Gillard, *McNair Report*, p.26.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

As a wider consideration of equality of opportunity, women teachers and their union representatives had been challenging the marriage bar for as long as it had existed. In the end, however, the expediency of numbers dictated the change, rather than the activism of the profession. Within a decade, the overwhelming dominance of single women in education would be reversed, and married women teachers would take the lead in numbers beyond that of all other individual groups.⁹⁵

Mary Dawson, as previously stated, saw the publication of the McNair Report as a defining moment in her career, coming as it did shortly before the opportunity of her own principalship arose. Less than a year after its publication, she had already accepted the role at Newton Park. As an educator who had lived through the interwar years, and who had worked amongst influential professionals in progressive institutions, Dawson was well placed to exploit the demands of McNair and the 1944 Education Act. Although McNair 'was tapping into longstanding perceptions of teacher educators,' it also provided a timely impetus to expand progressive ideas and give recognition to those who had already embraced change in their work to date.⁹⁶ It was, in Dawson's view, 'an opportune moment.'⁹⁷ The report was also welcomed by the ATCDE, itself a development of the Training Colleges Association (TCA), formed to work for the promotion of the teacher trainers. It announced that:

the executive committee of the ATCDE warmly welcomes the general tenor and recommendations of the McNair Report...at the critical turning point in English Education it is essential for the proper development of the teaching profession that immediate steps should be taken to establish a close and integral association with the universities through whom alone the standards, status and freedom of the profession can be assured.⁹⁸

Despite post-war shortages, which meant that equipping the new institutions was to be a challenge, the new teacher training colleges had the backing of McNair, Beveridge, the 1944 Education Act and the whole structure of post-war reform.

⁹⁵ Viola Klein investigated the employment situation for married women for her reports in the 1960s. These analysed the changing patterns of employment in a number of jobs, and the specific conditions which married women had experienced. See Viola Klein, 'The Demand for Professional Womanpower', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 17.2 (1966) 183-197. Viola Klein, 'Married Women in Employment', *Population*, 17.3 (1962) 254-261.

⁹⁶ Whitehead, 'Contesting McNair', p.523.

⁹⁷ Mary Dawson, *The History of the College*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive (uncatalogued).

⁹⁸ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.71

Born in the austerity of the 1940s, these newly founded institutions developed further during the relative economic buoyancy of the 1950s. It was a good time to be in possession of a professional training and qualification, and the first groups of certificated women were in high demand on entering the jobs market. Employment levels at the time were generally high but particularly so in the teaching profession.⁹⁹ Former Newton Park College students themselves attest to the ready availability of teaching posts after qualification, as newly-trained teachers fed the growing schools in the baby-boom era. Freed from many of the economic strictures endured by their parent's generation, the post-war cohort lived their young adult lives against a backdrop of 'economic growth, full employment and high incomes.'¹⁰⁰

Another result of a favourable economic climate was that early marriage was popular, and an option that resulted in the establishment of what Spencer describes as the 'portfolio career', involving different roles as full time teacher, mother, part-time teaching, then full time teaching or associated positions again later in life.¹⁰¹ For many women this became the pattern, and they were able to have families, later pursuing their careers for a substantial period of time. Although in terms of twenty-first century expectation this appears a modest or limiting option, it was nonetheless one which had not existed for women before, and was considered a radical new development at the time.¹⁰²

This new situation gave professionally trained women confidence that their careers could continue, such was the demand for their skills. Todd affirms that 'rather than leaving work when they became mothers, the women of the 1950s were the first generation likely to remain in paid employment throughout their adult lives, with only a temporary break to have children.'¹⁰³ Women of all classes worked, contributing to the household economy as a whole, with the intention of 'seeing their children get on' or to afford the consumer goods which became more widely available in the prosperity of the period.¹⁰⁴ Marriage may have been a popular option, but in the economy of the 1950s, a professional training was a lifelong investment which offered an alternative choice, alongside independence and

⁹⁹ Todd, *The People*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁰ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women*, p.151.

¹⁰¹ Spencer, *Gender and Work*, p.14.

¹⁰² Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.177.

¹⁰³ Todd, *The People*, p.209.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.210.

multiple benefits. Women's dual role, divided broadly between home and work, might consist of professional training and work, a period at home with children, followed by a return to work in later life. This became a newly identified pattern, seen at the time as a progression from the stark choice of either home or work, which women teachers had faced in the period between the wars. National economic growth, in combination with the securities of the welfare state, presented a new and different set of choices, which the public – and women in particular – were able to embrace enthusiastically. As Spencer asserts, seen in the context of the post-war era, the provisions of the Beveridge report underpin this enthusiasm.¹⁰⁵

The Beveridge Report and the resulting legislation and terminology of the post-war welfare state placed emphasis on a sole family breadwinner with dependent spouse and children. This bias has been the subject of criticism in the years since, but the legislation also supported the individual in times of need, and made specific child benefit payments which were paid directly to mothers. Jane Lewis confirms that these benefits were greatly anticipated and appreciated by many, and states that 'during the Second World War, women perceived that they would benefit most from the post-war welfare state, particularly from a universal National Health Service.'¹⁰⁶ Such cultural shifts promoted the confidence and self-assurance of a generation, and the post-war period promised possibility; for greater personal autonomy, for fuller citizenship, for better schools and health services. There was the opportunity presented through the changes to education and training which might lead to a lifelong career path, to a home and family life of one's own – and also embedded in the McNair recommendations, the possibility of returning women teachers to be retrained after a career break.¹⁰⁷ This too represented a radical change from the interwar situation, providing another strong message about the important role and value of professional women in society. Newton Park College embraced this trend, establishing and developing courses for mature students and women returners.

The establishment of the welfare state has dominated discourse on the social changes of the period. Kenneth Morgan, in his passionate account of the 1945-51 Labour government, gives his opinion on the life-changing and life-enhancing

¹⁰⁵ Spencer, *Gender and Work*, p.27.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, *Women in Britain*, p.8.

¹⁰⁷ Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred* (London: Butler & Tanner, 1965) p.288.

aspects of the Beveridge Report, welfare legislation, and the National Health Service. The changes, he states, 'wrenched the course of British History into significant new directions', and he points out the ways in which these transformations affected the lives of the post-war generation.¹⁰⁸ The trickle-down effect of societal support 'from cradle to grave' contributed in building of greater confidence in the 1950s generation.¹⁰⁹ Although Morgan's assessment of Attlee's government and its work is somewhat uncritical and romanticized, evidence from the Dawson papers and oral history testimony upholds the positive attitudes that the social reforms of the post-war era brought with them. Former students comment favourably on their ability to remain in education and to enjoy greater choice and opportunity as a result. The post-war generation felt the assurance of society's investment in their futures. In turn they felt confident in pursuing the new training opportunities presented. The College at Newton Park was established to provide these opportunities.

The McNair Report had highlighted the opportunity for recognition of what was already being provided in the best and most progressive teacher training colleges as they developed in the post-war period. The growth of such colleges enabled a greater number of young people, and women in particular, to enter higher education, and acted as a bridge towards wider participation in the higher education sector. At the recommendation of McNair two-year courses were eventually extended to three years, and as a result of the Robbins Report of 1963, became degree-bearing. Certificated teachers were offered the chance to top-up their teaching qualification with a further year of training, and the most progressive and forward-looking colleges were able to develop even further. Teacher training colleges paved the way for such expansion; in the post-war years the number of students in colleges had trebled, and although only 4% of 18-19 year-olds attended university in the 1950s, the fact that 25% achieved the entry requirements indicates the readiness of the sector for future development.¹¹⁰ The Robbins Report stated that at the time of publication, two thirds of students attending training colleges were women, and those colleges were overwhelmingly led by women principals. The existence of the colleges allowed the massive expansion of higher education provision which the further demands of the Robbins

¹⁰⁸ Morgan, *Labour in Power*, p.vii.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Todd, *The People*, p.231.

Report could later exploit.¹¹¹ Women's colleges, under the leadership of women principals, provided a route for the post-war generation of women to enter higher education in increasingly large numbers, meaning that women, in particular, were the chief beneficiaries of the post-war expansion of education – in both secondary schools and in higher education.¹¹² This, coupled with the long-held belief by feminist campaigners that education was intrinsic to freedom and equality, created a landscape ripe for exploitation for those determined to act.¹¹³

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the context of educational policy and reform in post-war Britain. In the midst of major change, educators were challenged to provide the vast numbers of teachers required to underpin a new system. The McNair Report provided both challenges and opportunities through its recommendations for increasing teacher numbers, extending courses, and improving college provision. Removing the marriage bar was a practical expedient through which to further increase those numbers, but it also ensured that the new teacher training colleges were able to promote the prospects of women in particular, whether as students or their tutors and leaders.

Women like Mary Dawson had long supported the idea that the quality of the teacher, at all levels of education, from nursery to higher education, determined the longer-term outcomes for a society. In this way she followed current educational thinking. The McNair Report and the 1944 Education Act, and the ideas they contained, in many ways supported and advanced these theories, and provided the springboard for more widespread educational improvement.

In the aftermath of the developments surrounding McNair and the act, Dawson was able to work to bring her own ambitions to the new college in Bath. As she noted in her draft speech to the first group of students, they would:

build a new college. No traditions, no corporate life, just what we make. We will watch it grow together. I feel it a unique privilege to be first principal. I hope they will feel it so to be the first students.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Hall, *Sex, Gender & Social Change* p.124. It was estimated in 1963 that a university student cost £660 per annum, whereas a student in a training college cost only £225.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p.12.

¹¹⁴ Mary Dawson, *Address to Students*, 17th January 1946.

Having spent her early career in a variety of educational establishments, Mary Dawson was by the mid-1940s an experienced educator, well-placed to be able to carry the ideas and rhetoric of the era forward in her own establishment. The next chapter gives an analysis of Dawson's background, early life and career, in order to understand the ethos and motivations she brought to Newton Park College.

Chapter 3

Dawson as Educationalist

The fullest educational opportunity is the key...to freedom, to status, career and personal fulfilment.¹

This chapter deals with the early life and influences which shaped Mary Dawson, who, given the task of leadership, carried out her role over the next twenty-two years. Although the principal of a local authority college, she was responsible for creating the character of the College, its aims and philosophy, focusing on the quality of the teacher and of education itself as a building block of society. In her own life she had experienced the liberation that education could bring, and had experienced for herself the strands of equality identified by Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska namely, 'women's access to education and the labour market, and the establishment of their status as equal citizens'.² Dawson herself exemplified these developments, as a university graduate, an economically independent woman and a recipient of the right to vote in 1928. Dyhouse notes that 'access to education, like the franchise, was a unifying goal in the feminist campaign,'³ and in Britain throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the education of women had been identified as a vital key to equality. Expansion of women's educational provision and practice were therefore at the forefront of the fight for emancipation. Many of the women operating from within the education field were aware of their importance in the push for equality, as educated women in their own right as well as examples to others, and due to the landscape of opportunity at the time, were likely to be the most highly-educated women in the country.⁴ This gave women in positions of leadership a particular sense of responsibility, which is also reflected in the outlook of the later generation of educators like Dawson. Researchers in the area of women's education highlight the characteristics of these women and the particular strand of influential women principals operating at

¹ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p.12.

² Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in 20th century Britain*, p.1.

³ Dyhouse, *Students*, p.121.

⁴ Oram, *Women Teachers*, *passim*.

that time. For example, Alison Oram's study of women teachers in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War, confirms the crucial role they played in the drive towards emancipation and equality. She notes the role of the rank and file of the profession, and that 'the continued engagement...of teachers with equality issues over the period 1900-1939 is impressive and unmatched by other women workers.'⁵ Having carried out her training and early career amidst this culture, Dawson was ready to embrace the responsibilities of leadership.

The founding of Newton Park College in the Autumn of 1945 was therefore an opportunity to build a new educational community with a fresh outlook, and one which embraced many of the prevalent post-war ideals, and built on the philosophies of equality and citizenship through education. All of these ideas were borne of earlier decades in the twentieth century, and were embodied in the person of Mary Dawson. An understanding of her life and experience sheds light on her motivations and indicates the ways that her own sense of agency was projected into her work in the creation of the College.

In 1945, Dawson was a forty-two year old Senior Education Lecturer and Deputy Principal at Whitelands College in London. In later years she would state that her work at Newton Park was the culmination of her life's work and career, and the realisation of her ambitions, knowledge and expertise. An examination of that life demonstrates many of the social and cultural shifts of the twentieth century, revealing the position and experience of a young girl in the First World War, of women graduates in the 1920s, and of teachers and professional women in the 1930s and beyond. Each of these roles represents a specific perspective in the history of women's agency, and the negotiation of each life stage reveals much in the character and philosophy of Mary Dawson herself. Her early life, her experiences and her career shaped the person she was, and each aspect informed the educator she became. Much of the evidence for this chapter is gleaned from Mary Dawson's own archive collection, in addition to an oral testimony interview, carried out towards the end of her career. The former is a deliberate gathering of documents which record the development of Newton Park College over three decades, and the latter takes the form of recorded answers to a framework of questions from two male students, the year before her retirement in

⁵ Oram, *Women Teachers*, *passim*.

1968.⁶ She was then looking back over many years, and many of her memories would have been the subject of much repetition; she appears self-deprecating and self-promoting in equal measure.

Alice Mary Dawson was born in Birmingham in 1903, the eldest child of Alfred and Mary Ann Dawson. Her father was a post office worker; the 1911 Census lists his occupation as 'Sorting Clerk and Telegraphist'. The same document records seven year old Alice Mary, her six year old brother, and a younger sister of eleven months. Also sharing their modest red-brick Victorian terrace were her paternal grandmother, and a retired couple, Mr. and Mrs. Walsh, listed on the census return as 'boarder' and 'boarder's wife'.⁷ These details hint at a humble background, but perhaps a family keen to bring in extra funds through taking in boarders. Alice Mary was at school when the First World War began, and remembered the war's effects on 'ordinary people like me'. She later recalled 'the awful gloom that the war cast upon my very early adolescence... I remember war being declared, and that something terrible was happening.' These early recollections give an impression of the total war as experienced from the home front. Dawson described how her home city:

was inundated with munitions workers, and these munition workers had more money. People like myself, whose father was at war, or children like myself, we were really short of food; we were hungry. The country was at breaking point. Rationing brought more fair shares for everyone.⁸

This realisation of the positive results of 'fair shares' clearly had an effect on the young Dawson; it would be a theme she returned to throughout her life.

Alice Mary Dawson was 'an intelligent and independent girl' and having been identified as such, was able to attend her local grammar school.⁹ Continuing her education would also have kept the young Mary away from work in the local munitions factories. According to her later recollections, at the age of sixteen:

I was very ill with an illness which today would be trivial but in those days was serious, and I stayed at school because the doctor thought it would be better for my health than leaving school. While I was away the

⁶ T Browne; D Moon, *Recorded and Transcribed Interview with Mary Dawson*, May 1967, Bath Spa University Archive, (BSU/3/29).

⁷ 1911 Census return for 13 Esme Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, available from <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XWZR-G6B> [Accessed 30.9.17].

⁸ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

⁹ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

headmistress, almost by accident, put me in a tiny little group of girls who were going to University. It happened in that sort of way.¹⁰

This is an interesting statement, simultaneously self-effacing – ‘almost by accident,’ as well as demonstrating great pride – ‘a tiny little group’. This group of girls would have been unusual at the time; in the early part of the twentieth century, girls and boys who were educated beyond secondary level were in the minority; the majority of children were educated in elementary schools, up to the school leaving age of fourteen. Those students going on to attend university were a smaller group, and even fewer of these were girls. At each stage, bright pupils relied on being identified as such by their teachers, as Dawson describes in her own case. Although numbers and accessibility in higher education had both increased by the time Dawson took up a place at Birmingham University in 1921, she remained among the elite in educational terms at that time. Bargielowska gives the proportion of women in the student population of Great Britain as ‘16% in 1900...which rose to 24% in 1920, 27% in 1930.’¹¹ This puts Mary Dawson in the midst of important growth and development of the higher education sector, and in a minority amongst women, but also amongst men, in educational terms. Significantly, Oram asserts that ‘women undergraduates between the wars knew they were part of a female elite.’¹² In addition to the opportunity of a university education itself, Dyhouse affirms that men and women of Dawson’s modest background formed as much as one third of the university student body after the First World War.¹³ This represents a favourable proportion amongst the relatively small number overall, indicating that many bright students could expect to be identified by their schools, and offered the chance of a higher education. Although by no means a pioneer as a woman in higher education, Dawson was part of a significant group, sufficient to feel the privilege of her position. This opportunity, for a girl from a modest background to change her own life through educational opportunity, was something she would never take for granted, and one she was keen to pass on to others.

¹⁰ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

¹¹ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women*, p.121 It would remain at this level until the 1980s.

¹² Oram, *Women Teachers*, p. 33.

¹³ Carol Dyhouse, ‘Going to university between the wars: access and funding’ *History of Education* 31.1 (2002) p.3.

¹³ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p.212.

From 1921 until 1924, Dawson read for a History degree. During her final year she was also a women's representative on the Guild of Students. A photograph of the 'Guild of Undergraduates Committee 1923/24' shows 'A.M. Dawson' in the centre of a group of seventeen men and eleven women who comprised the Guild committee in that year. The Guild of Undergraduates was responsible for the sports and social participation at Birmingham University, and the number of women on the Guild committee indicates their central role in the organization.¹⁴ Whilst serving with the Guild, Dawson was also captain of the institution's netball team. In both capacities she represented the university at local, regional and national events, and recalls travelling to different parts of England for dances, sports' meetings and inter-union activities:

I really had rather a glamorous life in my last year at college. You can imagine it. I was not only in the Union but I was captain of netball and was rushing around the country at weekends with my team playing other universities, so I really lived a terrific life. I had unusual responsibilities and freedom at university...I felt like a rebel in those days.¹⁵

Dawson here describes this freedom as 'glamorous', 'terrific'; full of action and 'rush'. The choice of language puts emphasis on the excitement of this period of her life –freedom is 'glamorous' and action and rush are 'terrific'. After this exciting phase was over, she would describe life in her first job as 'thin' – and years later, repeatedly used the motif of a 'full and abundant life' to describe an ideal of existence. She returned to this theme repeatedly in her speeches, her teaching, and her general attitude in relation to her work at Newton Park College.

It is not known how Dawson financed her undergraduate years at Birmingham University, but it seems likely that her parents made the sacrifice themselves in a pre-grant era.¹⁶ Dyhouse affirms that since women could, through education and training, expect a better life than their parents, many parents were willing to make sacrifices for this to happen. A university education represented a passport to security and respectability through a later career. This was one possible solution at the time, the alternative being a scholarship or the signing of the 'pledge' to work as a teacher within one's own local authority after qualification. Since Dawson

¹⁴ *Photograph, University of Birmingham Guild of Undergraduates Committee 1923-24*, University of Birmingham Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, (UB/GUILD/I/16/6).

¹⁵ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

¹⁶ Dyhouse, *Students*, pp 42, 43.

cites the multiple job applications she completed, the latter seems unlikely, and there is no evidence of a scholarship. Notably, when Dawson returned to Birmingham University to pursue postgraduate study, she was completely self-financing, and in a manner which reflected her ambition and determination.

In 1924, Mary Dawson graduated from Birmingham University. When interviewed about her life and work just before her retirement, she was asked if she had always intended to teach, Dawson replied:

I never intended to do anything that was professional, women didn't...You have got to remember that again, back at this time, there were not the opportunities for girls that there are today....if a girl had a higher education then really the only thing open to her was to go into teaching. Having gained a degree there was nothing more then but to train as a teacher and go into education. The one thing I wanted to do was to get away from home; I was quite clear about that. So I started applying for posts all over the place.¹⁷

Although Dawson stated that teaching was 'the only option', it was nonetheless the route to the independence she sought. Holden affirms that 'teaching remained by far the most popular career...which offered a route to social mobility for clever working class and lower middle class girls.'¹⁸ Dawson's own words here highlight the reality that, as a result of the choice of career amongst women graduates in the inter-war period, the teaching profession represented the academic elite; women teachers were frequently far better educated than their male peers.¹⁹ Teaching offered 'prestige and status' as well as security.²⁰ It could provide 'a lifelong career, intellectual work, public service and professional material rewards.'²¹ For those who adopted the single life, by default or by choice, the ability to enjoy economic independence alongside respectability and status was an enviable position to hold.²² It is important to note that Dawson's degree meant that she could become a grammar school teacher, and that the social esteem afforded

¹⁷ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

¹⁸ Holden, *Shadow of Marriage*, p.39.

¹⁹ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.37.

²⁰ Mary Dawson, Speech, Bishop Fox's School Prize Distribution, Taunton, 3rd February 1955, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive (uncatalogued).

²¹ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.9.

²² Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.23.

to this role was greater than that for the elementary teachers.²³ Elementary teachers were the 'teachers of the people.'²⁴ Throughout the interwar period and beyond, educators were focussed on the elevation of the whole profession, so that anomalies like this could be eradicated.²⁵ In holding and working towards positions of respect and a certain degree of authority, women across the teaching profession sought to raise and improve the status of education and teaching itself, especially since women dominated the profession, even more so in the teaching of the youngest children. The high ideals exemplified by women principals like Lillian de Lissa at Gipsy Hill College were also explored in many of the teacher training colleges in this period, resulting in the development of progressive ideologies:

Education must be elevated to a religion, and those who deal with it are priests. Women must enter the religion of education, prepared to work for the same purification of spirit, the same consecration of self as does the priest. Then shall they enter their schools with powers untold, to take their place with priests and scientists as guardians of humanity.²⁶

Educational writings of the period demonstrate similar language. In the development of education itself in the interwar years, in research and progressive practice, and in the expansion which followed, many of these ideals are prevalent. Educational research began to emphasise the role of the teacher in the development, rather than simply the instruction, of children; they were to provide the appropriate environment, so that the child could learn experientially. Rote learning, the acquisition of mere fact and repetitive information, and mere 'mechanical obedience' was to be avoided - the aim was to educate 'a more creative, less inhibited individual, or alternatively a true democrat...capable of a high level of service.'²⁷ Such ideas gained significant ground in the interwar period, and also contributed towards Dawson's theories for the education of the child, and by extension, the training of their teachers.

Entering the teaching profession in 1925, conditions in the job market were difficult. Dawson exhibited a strength of purpose, with eighty-six job applications

²³ Aldrich, *History of Education*, p.55.

²⁴ Tropp, *School Teachers*, p.1. McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.21.

²⁵ Gosden, *Evolution*, p.266.

²⁶ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.16.

²⁷ Lawson; Silver, *A Social History*, p.397.

before successfully securing her first teaching post as History mistress in a Derbyshire grammar school, where she remained from 1926 until 1929. Later she moved on to acquire experience at a second grammar school, this time in Dorset. In these initial posts, Dawson witnessed traditional rote-learning, a teaching method which prevailed at the time, but which dismayed the idealistic young woman. She recalled that:

The older members of the staff seemed to ask one question about the children, and the question was not what sort of boys and girls are they becoming, but will they get through French, Latin, Maths or whatever they were responsible for. It seemed they were not concerned with the children as persons at all.²⁸

Dawson deplored a system in which children were merely expected to repeat information; it was a subject to which she would return throughout her career. She was passionately interested in the development of the person as a whole, and frequently alluded to the faults in a method which measured success by results.

She was, in all her teaching posts, observing, judging and gathering information about the educational provision she witnessed. This information and research helped her to build an ethos about children, and by contrast to what she saw, the advantages of a more progressive education for pupils and their teachers. She was also deeply influenced by the atmosphere of educational investigation which prevailed at the time. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the need to build a modernised education system, led to research into how this could be achieved. Most influential amongst the many reports which were produced in this period were the previously mentioned Hadow Reports of 1923 – 1933. Dawson's early career played out with this research culture as a backdrop, and many of the educational ideas featured are echoed in Dawson's own beliefs and practice. Having taught in grammar schools, she had seen for herself the limitations of rote-learning, and she was developing a philosophy which encouraged a broad approach to learning. She later said of Newton Park College applicants:

Some girls come to us with wonderful capacity to memorise for examinations but little power of thought...limited interests, little self-confidence, little social poise; frequently they have a real distaste for study.

²⁸ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

Before we can do much with these girls, we must re-educate them and open the windows of their minds.²⁹

Dawson would later cite the educational theories of Alfred Whitehead. Whitehead, a mathematician and philosopher who wrote on the subject of education, was much discussed during the years of Mary Dawson's training. His theories were adopted in progressive educational circles, since they promoted ideas of self-development and warned against the danger of 'inert ideas' delivered solely for the purpose of exam preparation. He asserted that 'no system of external tests which aims primarily at examining individual scholars can result in anything but educational waste.'³⁰

In order to be able to effect the changes and ideas she was developing, Dawson would need wider knowledge and a more senior position. She said of herself 'I was naturally a fairly idealistic person and I decided, therefore, that I must go back and do some further study in education.'³¹ Having witnessed teaching styles in grammar schools which she considered old-fashioned and restrictive, she enrolled for a Master's degree in Education, returning to Birmingham University in 1931. In this Dawson showed a particular brand of determination, funding her own studies on a meagre budget:

I had to save money to feed myself, and I had to save money to pay my fees and I had to face going without a salary. I took a room which I got for 10/- a week and I lived on brown bread and butter, cheese, watercress, herrings and apples. This was an attempt to make the cheapest possible balanced diet and to save as much money as I could.³²

After completing further study, although unable to complete her second year and dissertation due to lack of funds, Dawson took a role as lecturer at Saffron Walden Training College, from 1931 until 1933. She then became the deputy head at West Hill Training College, (1933-1934) followed by three years as Lecturer in Education at Brighton Training College. Dawson recalled later that 'Brighton was one of the colleges in the country which was being closed because there were too many

²⁹ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Argyle Young Families Association*, 14th February 1950, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, (uncatalogued).

³⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* (1929) *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* available from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/whitehead/> [Accessed 30.6.18].

³¹ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

³² Ibid.

teachers' colleges in the country, incredible though it may sound, just before the war they closed some teachers' colleges because we were producing too many teachers!' ³³ This was in sharp contrast to the extreme shortage of teachers which would dictate government action immediately after the war. When Brighton College closed, Dawson took up her next position at Whitelands College, London, beginning in 1937. Her experiences at this institution would galvanize and confirm many of Dawson's own theories on the education of children and their teachers. At Whitelands the research and debates of the period were being fully explored, firmly influenced by those theories which emphasised child-centred learning. She said that:

In this century, our approach to children has been revolutionised by the gradual acceptance in our infant schools and now slowly in our schools for older children, of the ideas and spirit of Froebel and Pestalozzi. Both of them emphasised the importance of the inner development of man, and the importance of leading children to self-realisation. Both of them loved children and believed that only by a deep sympathy with them could one truly educate them.³⁴

The most influential of Whitelands' principals was Winifred Mercier and although she had recently retired when Dawson arrived at the college, her impact continued to be felt as 'one of the most influential training college reformers in the interwar years'.³⁵ Joan D Browne described her as one of the 'modest giants' of the teacher training world.³⁶ During her long tenure at Whitelands, Mercier had asserted that 'women educationalists are much more open-minded, more liberal and more enterprising than men'.³⁷ She believed that 'education was the root of all social progress' and ensured that the college and its people 'were kept in the vanguard of response to change'.³⁸ Importantly, Whitelands was a predominantly female environment, with a strong community ethos, having been established in 1841 as the first female teacher training college.³⁹ Dawson would witness the value of a community with a shared focus; in Mercier's style – open-minded, liberal,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dawson, *Argyle Young Families*.

³⁵ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.43. Margaret Bryant, 'Mercier, Winifred Louise (1878–1934)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 available from <http://www.oxforddnb.com.bathspa.idm.oclc.org/view/article/48685> , [26.9.17].

³⁶ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers* p.77.

³⁷ Bryant, *Mercier*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, p.155. Tropp, *School teachers*, p.11. Hilton, Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries*, p.183.

enterprising and socially progressive. A strong community could support its members, provide security and a shared vision. The ethos Dawson was developing featured child-centred progressive teaching, the recognition of the importance of the teaching profession, the lifelong development of the individual and their role as responsible citizens, and most importantly, the role of the community in support of all these ideals.

Mercier was one of the women whose leadership so inspired Dawson, and it is interesting to note the impact of Mercier and her College in general on progressive educational thinking during the interwar period. She was twice president of the Training College Association, which represented college staffs and opinion in the interwar period, and which became the ATCDE in 1943.⁴⁰ In both iterations of the association, Whitelands College was prominent, and was at the leading edge of educational ideas and practice, frequently citing ‘the most progressive opinions of the day.’⁴¹ Many of those involved at a high level in the educational field had links to Whitelands, for example women such as Elsie Bazeley, the head of Bishop Otter College from 1930 to 1935, who had also taught there.⁴² Later in life Dawson would recall with admiration some of the many inspiring women she met and knew during her early career, as well as the vast numbers of women teachers who positively influenced their own schools and pupils. Dawson also met Lilian Barker, the inspiring and highly respected governor of the Borstal Institution for Girls at Aylesbury. Barker had also trained as a teacher at Whitelands, and used the progressive ideas about education and lifelong learning she acquired there to revolutionise and reform her institution.⁴³ Dawson applied for a teaching role there, and although unsuccessful, the experience of meeting and talking to the influential and inspiring Dame Lilian stayed with her. She would later recall Barker – ‘a rather masculine figure in uniform’ – and used the experience to reflect on her own capabilities. She said: ‘I had not realised the intensity of the problem one was coping with.’⁴⁴ This is perhaps another indication of Dawson’s idealism – education could not solve all society’s problems.

⁴⁰ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.14.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.11, p.17.

⁴² Edwards, *Women*, p.55.

⁴³ Harold Scott, ‘Barker, Dame Lilian Charlotte (1874–1955)’, rev. D. Thom, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, available from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/bathspa.idm.oclc.org/view/article/30590>, [Accessed 3.9.17].

⁴⁴ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

As previously mentioned, many women teachers and training college staff in the interwar period were well educated, inclined to be forward looking and in the vanguard of educational change. Associations such as the TCA and ATCDE, enabled professional networking and mutual support amongst a group influential in their field. These women were also likely to be single, having chosen careers over marriage. At the time, they had faced this choice as a result of the marriage bar, and in those areas where it was enforced it meant the 'sharp conflict' for women between marriage and a career, a situation which Dawson would emphasise in later years.⁴⁵ The women then in leadership or management roles in schools and colleges throughout the country were most decidedly in this position. For those who chose career over marriage, the benefits of the teaching profession were positive ones; it was described as 'most satisfying to intelligent women', and certainly, as well as being a socially respectable profession, it was also an economically attractive career, with a salary scale which could accommodate an independent life.⁴⁶ This was despite reductions in teachers' remuneration in 1923 and 1931, which were due to public spending cuts caused by national economic conditions.⁴⁷ Oram asserts that, as long as they continued to move up the salary scale, 'women teachers enjoyed a comfortable income by the time they were in their thirties.'⁴⁸

Mary Dawson remained single throughout her life. She was asked about this choice near the end of her career, in an interview with students, in 1967: 'Do you have moments of regret that you've devoted your life in this way and wish you'd become something more obscure, become a housewife or something?' Her response was emphatic:

NO. Not...I don't...No. I would have been a discontented housewife. It would never have filled my life. I would always be wanting to give more to life than I could have done as a housewife. I should not have been happy otherwise.⁴⁹

Earlier in the same interview, she recalled growing up in the First World War and drew upon the popularly conceived trope of the 'lost generation'. She stated, that

⁴⁵ Dawson, Speech, *Devonport High School for Girls*, 18th October 1963.

⁴⁶ Oram, *Women Teachers*, pp. 24, 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.4.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.25.

⁴⁹ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

'of course it is true that a whole generation of young men were wiped out...lots of my friends were being killed, boys that I knew, who lived in my neighbourhood.'⁵⁰ This is given as the implied reason for her single status, and indeed the same justification was given by many women who reached maturity in the 1920s. Following the horror and shock of the wartime casualty figures, the public were made fully aware of the implications of such overwhelming loss. The 'lost generation' was a major theme of the time, and yet this perception of loss remained far greater than the reality. In J M Winter's view, 'the slaughter of nearly three quarters of a million men was undoubtedly a demographic event of significance, but it lies more in the realm of the social and cultural than in the statistical and demographic.'⁵¹ The imbalance in the sexes as a result of war, whether real or perceived, became a major narrative of the interwar years. There was on one hand a strong social perception of loss and what it meant, alongside a reality which saw a greater number of marriages in the years after the war than had occurred before. The perception of loss rendered the single woman more visible to society, and in turn troubled the media and the medical profession, subverted the 'natural order of things', and 'made unmarried women...increasingly visible...their supposed problems...the focus of much attention'.⁵² Katherine Holden argues that 'the status of spinster was associated with widowhood in the decades after the First World War in Britain, an association that is still active in our collective memory.'⁵³ This association seems to be what Dawson's own personal narrative drew upon, recalling the potential sympathy for the lost generation to support a defensive narrative of 'imaginary widowhood'.⁵⁴ Holden further asserts that 'some women consciously drew upon the belief that they could never marry, to carve out new careers [and build] their subsequent life history.'⁵⁵ Women used their apparently enforced single status as an excuse to be independent, and in this respect 'found imaginary widowhood empowering.'⁵⁶

And yet the public sympathy for their positions, for their subsequent positive action and independence of spirit would, in later years, be used against these women,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London: Macmillan, 1985) p.250.

⁵² Katherine Holden, 'Nature takes no notice of morality: singleness and married love in interwar Britain' *Women's History Review* 11.3 (2007) 481 -504, p. 482.

⁵³ Katherine Holden, 'Imaginary Widows: Spinsters, marriage and the 'Lost Generation' in Britain after the Great War' *Journal of Family History*, 30.4, (2005) 388 – 409, *passim*.

⁵⁴ Holden, *Imaginary Widows*, p.399.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.398.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.405.

rendering them more and more visible and open to criticism. The life of the never-married woman became a series of oppositional meanings to be negotiated. The 'surplus woman' was not a new phenomenon, long predating the Great War and stretching back to the 1851 census when published statistics had first highlighted the trend.⁵⁷ By necessity or choice or a combination of the two, these never-married women faced different choices in their lives. A different set of societal conditions saw employed single women leading useful independent lives, whilst simultaneously that same society found fault and criticized their ability to do so. Holden, Froide and Hannam discuss the 'oppositional meanings of singleness' and its particular relevance to the teaching profession.⁵⁸ From the end of the First World War, and into the 1920s and 1930s, the meanings of the single status of women became varied and contradictory. Singleness could be identified as representing widowhood, real or imaginary; it evoked pity; it demonstrated admirable independence as well as dangerous independence; it stood for freedom. With the growing interest and awareness of psychology, the single state could also represent eccentricity, subversion, and danger, and the single woman teacher could represent all of these. Those women who sought promotion to take their careers further stood out all the more; Krista Cowman and Louise Jackson assert that 'the educated woman...came to be stereotyped as...asexual, austere and anxious, within both the trade and the popular press.'⁵⁹

Throughout the same period, the growing awareness of psychology amongst the general public gave such representations of singleness a new and alarming aspect. Psychology and psychological explanations appeared in novels, in newspapers and in magazines. Alerted to the idea of the 'lost generation', and what it might mean, the press announced, in sensationalist headlines 'Men Outnumbered Everywhere'.⁶⁰ Psychological explanations of human behaviour fed moral panic, and spinsters were denigrated for denying their 'natural' role as wives and mothers. Pugh describes the way that some women 'bitterly attacked the spinster as the barren sister, the withered tree, the acidulous vessel, and deplored

⁵⁷ Pat Thane, 'Girton Graduates: Earning and Learning 1920s -1980s', *Women's History Review*, 13.3 (2004) 347-360, p.351.

⁵⁸ Katherine Holden, June Hannam, Amy Froide, 'Introduction' *Women's History Review* 17.3 (2008) 313-326, p.319.

⁵⁹ Krista Cowman, Louise A Jackson, 'Middle-Class Women and Professional Identity', *Women's History Review*, 14.2 (2005) 165-180, p.172.

⁶⁰ Pugh, *Women*, p.77.

her influence in schools.’⁶¹ A society with a growing interest in psychology and sexology, concerned with the status quo, worried that such women were ‘unnatural’. They were accused of stealing men’s jobs and as a result were subject to increased negative attention from the press. The traditional schoolma’am was also presented as ‘repressive and dehumanised.’⁶² But the spinster schoolmistress was a crucial component of English educational life; the 1931 Census showed that upwards of 85% of all women teachers were unmarried.⁶³

Spinsters were deemed to have suppressed their instincts by not marrying, which in ‘new psychology’ terms meant repression, which in turn threatened a whole range of neuroses. At the very least, their lives were seen as narrow, confined and limited, an association which had also filtered its way into the McNair Report. The report’s statement at the ‘narrow’ life within women’s teacher training colleges needed little explanation to people well-versed in the language of psychology. However, Oram asserts that although ‘the image of the thwarted, unfulfilled spinster teacher was powerful, [it was] not completely taken on by single women themselves.’⁶⁴ Teachers were, after all, accustomed to the ideas of psychological analysis and used many of the theories themselves in their work. Teachers as a profession were early adopters of psychoanalytic concepts, studying child development and behaviourist theories at training college and beyond. If single women teachers were assumed to lead stunted lives, then the evidence of those women’s actual lives was proof enough to refute such accusations. The writer Winifred Holtby wrote:

The legend of the Frustrated Spinster (*sic*) is one of the most formidable social influences of the modern world. It is impossible, with any regard for the meaning of words whatsoever, to call such women frustrated; most of them live lives as full, satisfied and happy as any human lives can be... They have contributed something to the world and known the satisfaction of creative achievement.⁶⁵

Holtby fought back against these ideas with her own personification of the single professional woman in the novel ‘*South Riding*’, written in 1936. When Sarah Burton, headmistress of a girl’s senior school faces choices about marriage and

⁶¹ Pugh, *Women*, p.75.

⁶² Dawson, Speech, Distribution of Awards to Nurses, Orthopaedic Hospital, 13th July 1950.

⁶³ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.47.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.194.

⁶⁵ Holtby, *Women*, p.125.

her future she declares 'I was born to be a spinster, and by God, I'm going to spin.'⁶⁶ Less publicly emphatic than a Sarah Burton character, Mary Dawson nonetheless demonstrated her ambition – from her first moves to 'get away from home; I was quite clear about that', to her career trajectory throughout the 1930s.⁶⁷ Her emphasis on the 'full and abundant life' gave a positive impression to those around her, and she was never herself accused of 'frustrated' spinsterhood, or 'unnaturalness'. She appears to have negotiated the perceived contradictions of the single state without criticism of this kind.

And so women teachers were expected to negotiate the negativities of spinsterhood, simultaneously abiding by the rule which forbade married women to follow their careers, and accepting a lesser rate of pay for generally identical work. But these 'surplus women' were the backbone of the teaching profession. Oram states that 'this acute and glaring contradiction posed a major tension for women teachers to negotiate.'⁶⁸ Another hurdle was presented to ambitious women like Mary Dawson, who had moved through a series of jobs with differing roles and responsibilities in her effort to gather experience. In stating that 'you either grow or you die, you can't stay put,' she described the model for her life.⁶⁹ As a model it may also explain her multiple jobs in a relatively short timeframe. Dawson had had seven jobs in eleven years, a detail which could also hint at the level of her own ambition. Hunt argues that during this period 'if women were strong, dominant, ambitious or determined, then they were likely to be categorised as unfeminine and therefore masculine women'.⁷⁰ Whether they were described as unfeminine, masculine, unnatural, frustrated or a danger to society, the ambitious women of the interwar period had to negotiate all these negative accusations in order to function in their lives and careers. It was a life categorized by negotiation of societal obstacles.

One of the most important and pivotal events for women in this period occurred in 1928, three years after Mary Dawson graduated, when the vote was finally granted to all women over the age of twenty-one. The long-held feminist hope for

⁶⁶ Winifred Holtby, *South Riding*, (First published 1936) (London: Virago, 2010) p.51.

⁶⁷ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

⁶⁸ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.49.

⁶⁹ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

⁷⁰ Hunt, *Lessons for Life*, p.24.

citizenship, as discussed in the introduction, had at last been realised. Having gained full citizenship, ongoing debates about the use of the status, the need for greater understanding of its roles, and the resulting potential to seek important changes in women's lives, took centre stage. The vote, as the practical instrument for change so long desired, could now be exploited. The rights, duties and responsibilities of citizenship had always been the aim of the feminist campaigns, because with possession of these rights, changes to women's lives could be sought and realised. The change still required, in order for women to further their aims for equality, concerned a broad range of legal, social and legislative reforms.⁷¹ Such 'welfare feminism' represented a clear way forward for women seeking change.⁷² Feminist organisations, women's unions and women's groups alike encouraged their members to 'use their vote wisely and to participate in the ongoing campaign for women's social and economic equality.'⁷³ This switch in emphasis is highlighted in the messages which women received in this respect. Women teachers were reminded that:

Our weapon is the vote. Every woman teacher who has sufficient clearness of vision to see that it is unfair to pay men a higher salary than women merely because of sex should make it her business to write to, or interview, her member of parliament, or the candidates for parliament in her constituency and point out to him or her that her vote will be given to the candidate who is sound on the question of equal pay. Every woman teacher who is a member of a political party should raise the question at party meetings, and keep it to the front.⁷⁴

Caitriona Beaumont's work on women's groups in the period 1928-1964, stresses the communal emphasis within groups such as the Mother's Union on the crucial questions which concerned their members, such as 'the introduction of equal pay, the provision of adequate public housing, improved maternity services and health care for women.' Collectively, there was 'a determination to ensure that women enjoyed a freer life with wider opportunities.'⁷⁵ In addition, there was a need for society to be able to observe the influence of women in public life. The National Union of Women Teachers argued that 'girls needed to see women teachers in positions of power such as headships, to provide positive role models and

⁷¹ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.20.

⁷² Beaumont, *Thesis*, p.76.

⁷³ Humm, *Feminisms*, p.38. Hall, *Sex, Gender & Social Change*, p.116.

⁷⁴ *The Woman Teacher*, 29th June 1928 p.288, cited in Gosden, *Evolution*, p.115.

⁷⁵ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.26.

encourage them to aim high in life, while boys equally needed to be shown that authority should not always lie in the hands of men.’⁷⁶ For women teachers, the granting of the vote and full citizenship provided the opportunity to realise both aims – to improve women’s opportunities and to work to abolish the inherent unfairness of unequal pay and the marriage bar.⁷⁷ Indeed for the vast numbers of single women in the profession, the unequal pay issue was brought into even sharper focus.

Oram refers to the activism of women teachers as a result of the specific conditions they continued to experience in the form of continuing unequal pay, which was officially justified at the time through a narrow definition of what constituted ‘a family’. There was a deep-seated view that the male family breadwinner had a family to support, which, campaigners pointed out, ignored the roles and responsibilities towards extended family members which featured in many single women’s lives.⁷⁸ With political activism reframed towards welfare feminism, the campaigns featuring equal pay and the marriage bar led to issues of ‘sex antagonism’, particularly between male and female teachers, at a time when male teachers were outnumbered by their female colleagues, approximately two to one.⁷⁹ In particular the equal pay issue, which was an important topic over nearly four decades of Mary Dawson’s career, was the source of ‘bitterness, militancy, [and] polarisation within teachers’ associations.’⁸⁰

It was frequently noted that men and women teachers were carrying out the same tasks, a fact not recognised in their remuneration. This was clearly articulated by the women’s teaching unions, in discourse and in government reports. McCulloch states that there was ‘exact gradation of jobs, perfect interchangeability of men and women employees within each grade [and] equal efficiency of the two sexes.’⁸¹ The report from the Royal Commission on Equal Pay, 1944-46, stated that:

Here, over a big field, are men and women doing identical jobs, doing them equally well, and doing them for unequal pay. The simplicity of these conditions is in no other sphere of employment exactly reproduced....⁸²Our

⁷⁶ Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.103.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.9.

⁷⁸ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.4.

⁷⁹ *Royal Commission on Equal Pay*, 1946, available from https://archive.org/stream/royalcommissiono033426mbp/royalcommissiono033426mbp_djvu.txt [Accessed 2.3.16].

⁸⁰ Gosden, *Evolution*, pp.102-131.

⁸¹ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.23.

⁸² *Royal Commission on Equal Pay*, 1946, paragraph 83.

broad conclusion is that the work done by men and women in this sphere is on the whole equal...parallel...equivalent.'⁸³

Much union activity in the interwar period was gender specific as a result of these conditions of professional employment. While the women's unions fought for changes in women's favour, the men's unions were equally vociferous in refuting their claims to equality. This increased the negative tone of discourse and emphasized the 'sex antagonism'.⁸⁴ Issues such as equal pay were exacerbated by conditions for promotion, and the only way to improve their earning capacity was for women to seek such promotion.⁸⁵ Alison Oram's study of women teachers shows that they experienced difficulty gaining promotion in mixed schools, due to 'men's horror of female authority, and so female institutions benefited from the inclusion of ambitious women.'⁸⁶ Oram asserts that they experienced 'a reasonably secure tradition of authority in those sectors of education seen as their own.'⁸⁷ These were the education of girls and younger children, and lectureships in the women's teacher training colleges, where legislation demanded a female principal and staff. This could also explain Mary Dawson's early career pattern – in order to fulfil her ambitions, she needed to move away from the grammar schools, which were likely to be mixed institutions. Promotion and authority could be found more easily, and was more widely available, in the women's colleges, making such a move favourable for an ambitious woman.

Meanwhile, partly in response to such basic antagonism, fuller exploitation of the rights of citizenship became a rallying call for women seeking to assert their positions. Women's unions, groups, and institutions, as well as individuals, wherever they might be found, developed a growing awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship, alongside a specific focus on those aspects of women's lives which still required change. Citizenship, its rights, responsibilities and meanings became the next articulation of women's emancipation and by the 1930s, 'feminism' was becoming a somewhat dated and pejorative term, associated with a former time, and with those women who had been involved in the fight for the franchise before 1918. Beaumont cites Vera Brittain, writing in

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Oram, *Women Teachers*, pp.104-109.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.83.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.82.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 83.

1928, who, in the tone of her friend Winifred Holtby, highlighted the public perception in which older feminists were portrayed as 'spectacled, embittered women, disappointed, childless, dowdy and generally unloved' echoing the same kinds of criticism which were being aimed at spinster teachers.⁸⁸ Beaumont also argues that 'publicly rejecting feminism made sense' for women's groups seeking to attract the modern wife, mother or working woman to their ranks, and points out the influence and broad appeal such groups enjoyed at the time.⁸⁹ Instead they preferred to shift the focus away from overt messages of feminism and towards the more practical action which sought more visible equality between the sexes such as the recognition of equal work and equal pay.⁹⁰ Young women in particular felt that they had been granted the freedom to pursue life as they chose. As Martin Pugh asserts 'the emancipated woman drove her own motor car, she did not stand for parliament.'⁹¹ In her 1934 essay *Women in a Changing Civilisation* Winifred Holtby wrote:

young women do not show any pro or anti-feminist bias. They had no need for strong opinions, as they did whatever they wanted or could do; the complete acceptance of women as human beings being taken as a matter of course.⁹²

The writer Dorothy L Sayers, another university-educated woman of Dawson's generation, in a lecture of 1938, stated that 'the time for 'feminism' in the old-fashioned sense of the word, [has] gone past.'⁹³ Like Mary Dawson these women, educated and articulate, chose to demonstrate their agency by living public and active lives. They were likely to eschew feminism in favour of tropes of citizenship inherent in having possession of the right to vote, and acceptance of those responsibilities of citizenship that full voting rights carried. The concepts and ideals of citizenship were at the root of Mary Dawson's beliefs and she considered that practical action as a citizen was more important than discussion of the issues, stating 'it is more by winning respect than by talking that we are going to improve our status.'⁹⁴ Women like Mary Dawson, then, demonstrated their emancipation

⁸⁸ Vera Brittain, *The Manchester Guardian*, 13th December 1928, cited in Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.4.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Innes, 'Women's Citizenship', p.621.

⁹¹ Pugh, *Women*, p.74.

⁹² Holtby, *Women*, p.6.

⁹³ Sayers, *Are Women Human?*, p.21.

⁹⁴ Mary Dawson, *Speech 'Education for Equal Status'* to National Council of Women, September 23rd 1952.

through their personal actions.⁹⁵ Themes of welfare feminism continued to be emphasised whilst a generation of women sought to demonstrate their equality through responsible citizenship. Later generations of women would however overlook the importance of this stage, a stage which saw considerable improvement in the status and activity of women despite, according to Beaumont, 'a narrative which suggests that after 1928...the [women's] movement lost momentum'. It was far from being a 'quiet period' for women like Dawson and her peers.⁹⁶

Through her university experience, her early teaching years, further training and years as an education lecturer, Mary Dawson gathered a wealth of experience. She had negotiated the dichotomy of the interwar unmarried woman, falling prey neither to negative accusations of the repressed spinster nor the narrowness of the teachers 'restricted life'. She had developed her own ethos of responsible citizenship, the possibilities of a forward-looking education and the quality of the individual. Her experiences as a child in the First World War had alerted her to ideas of fair shares. Although from a modest, and in her own words an 'ordinary' background, she had benefited from the opportunity of a university education. This situated her amongst an elite group of women, likely to be liberal in outlook and aware of the issues of the day. Ambitious, she had progressed steadily in her career, expressing satisfaction at her choice despite the initially perceived and expressed limitations of such a choice. Through observation, experience and further training she was able to formulate her own ideas about the education of school children as well as for the preparation and training of their teachers in order to deliver change according to progressive ideas prevailing at the time. Dawson had passionately promoted education as a means to a full and satisfying life, along with belief in the individual's role as responsible citizen; her philosophy was itself borne of the idea of emancipation which she upheld throughout her adult life. Sue Innes has reasoned that 'the new-found sense of citizenship was a permanent source of strength to the feminist movement.'⁹⁷ If there was a boundary between citizenship and feminism, then it was a fluid boundary, fluctuating according to the realisation of the work still to be done.⁹⁸ After eight years at Whitelands College, including promotion to deputy principal, Mary Dawson applied for the role of

⁹⁵ Pugh, *Women*, p.235.

⁹⁶ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.1.

⁹⁷ Innes, 'Women's Citizenship', p.624.

⁹⁸ Innes, 'Women's Citizenship', p.635.

Principal of a teacher training college, about to be opened in Bath. The war had ended, the world of education was being overhauled, and she was the woman chosen to lead the new college. After her interview in Bath in September 1945 she immediately notified, via telegram, her best friend Hannah Lawrance, with whom she shared a house in London. It read 'Appointed – Mary'.⁹⁹

Dawson's interview and appointment were only the first step in a long and challenging career as principal of the new teacher training college. The next chapter deals with the beginnings of the Newton Park College, the challenges the founders faced, and the ways in which they responded to those challenges in bringing post-war opportunities for the College, its women, and the teaching profession into practice.

⁹⁹ Telegram, Mary Dawson to Hannah Lawrance, September 1945, Scrapbook 1, *Archive 1945-1959*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, uncatalogued).

Chapter 4

Dawson in Practice: The Creation of Newton Park College

The permanent home of the College will be at Newton Park, a handsome Georgian mansion standing in 100 acres of beautiful grounds, including gardens, playing fields, pasture and woodland, and two lakes, forming part of the lovely Newton Park Estate on the outskirts of Bath. A mediaeval castle turret, and outbuildings of great architectural beauty are being converted for use by the College. In addition, it is planned to build on the estate a gymnasium, assembly hall and residential accommodation. The possession of a small dairy farm gives opportunities for developing a rural and agricultural bias.¹

The initial development of Newton Park Teacher Training College illustrates much that preoccupied society in the mid-1940s, and highlights the tensions between the desire to create social change amidst the realities of post-war austerity. This chapter explores the archival documents detailing the origins of Newton Park College, and reveals those tensions as they played out in Bath. The space the College utilised, a former family estate and country house, became an important part of its identity, and so the reasons for the availability of the Park and its role as a further expression of citizenship, are also examined. The chapter also emphasises the importance of a community in providing women with a supportive network of like-minded individuals, and the ways that Mary Dawson used these ideas in the ethos of the college she was charged with leading. It is important to note that the archival documents used are largely those kept by Dawson in her own collection and that this is therefore an examination of a purposefully created record, intended to relay a particular and personal version of events. These documents were selected as a record of the origins of the College, and therefore tell a version of the College story which Dawson herself carefully curated, and kept in her possession until her death. Other primary sources are those official records copied for retention at the College, which are therefore similarly selective; these form part of more substantial archives held elsewhere, dealing with, for example, the wider work of the City Council, of which the training college was but one part. Research in archive collections in Bath, Birmingham and Coventry provide an

¹ *University of Bristol Institute of Education*, (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1947) (BSU/1/30).

alternative view, and the contrast between these primary sources will be discussed throughout the following chapters.

As described in Chapter 2, the 1944 Education Act was intended to overhaul the education system, and focus on the ‘ignorance’ aspect of the ‘five giants’ of social need as described in the Beveridge Report. The act called for local authorities to organise the education system needed to carry society forward into the modern world, and to provide a new generation with the skills and knowledge to help take the country forward. These aspirational and ambitious plans needed teachers, and teachers were in short supply. Wartime service had sent many men and women in alternative directions. The Emergency Training Scheme for teachers was created in order to train ex-forces personnel, but it was designed as a quick fix, not a long-term strategy. With only one year’s instruction, these teachers would be adequate as a temporary solution, but not skilled enough for longer term careers in the new educational landscape. The acute need for this rapid training was recognised, but the Ministry of Education required a more permanent solution; the temporary colleges operated for just six years before being transferred to permanent status or closed altogether.² In the longer term, there were plans for extra colleges to deliver the (already existing) two-year teacher training course, which was intended, on the recommendation of the McNair committee, to mature quickly into a three-year course. Any students intended for the two-year course would need to begin their training as soon as possible. In May 1945, Ministry of Education ‘Circular 49’ was issued to local authorities across the country. The announcement stated that:

A considerable expansion of the permanent facilities for the training of teachers will be required after the war...to make it possible to dispense with the continued recruitment of unqualified teachers. A further expansion will be needed when it is found possible to introduce a three-year course as recommended by the McNair Committee. Every effort is being made to increase the number of places in the women’s colleges; but when all allowance has been made for these measures, there will be a considerable number of good women candidates for whom additional accommodation will be required. These candidates should on no account be deprived of the opportunity to begin their training this year...The Minister asks Local Education Authorities to consider as a matter of very special urgency what they can do to provide some new Training Colleges, of an improvised type

² Keating, *Teacher Education*, p.4.

at once, in order to accommodate as many as possible of these surplus women candidates.³

The City of Bath was quick to respond to the Ministry of Education request;⁴ Browne notes that only two local authorities acted so quickly, although more were to follow over the next ten years.⁵ Such a swift response demonstrates the local council's longer term ambitions in education, and its bold ambitions to establish a regional centre of educational excellence.⁶ Councillors such as A.W.S. Berry are frequently quoted in the local press as advocating the policy 'that Bath shall become an educational centre because it fitted in with the city's tradition,' reflecting the links to its history as a centre of medical learning.⁷

In terms of location, Newton Park ideally fulfilled the criteria as set out in the ministry request. It had sufficient space to allow for adaptation in terms of both grounds and buildings; it was also close to both Bath and Bristol, rendering it 'not unduly remote' from other supporting institutions and centres of population.⁸ Colleges like Newton Park would be funded partly by central government and partly by Bath City Council, but there were many people in the city, both officials and members of the public, who urged a cautious approach to local public spending, particularly as Bath had its own extensive war damage following the blitz raids of April 1942. The raids had damaged or destroyed over 19,000 public and residential buildings in the city, each of which required rebuilding or repair. The local newspaper, the *Bath and Wilts Chronicle*, reported the council's approval of the Newton Park development, as part of a longer term policy 'of making Bath an educational centre with facilities on a par with its status as a treatment centre.'⁹ Bath had always been prominent as a centre of medical expertise but this too was changing with the proposals for a National Health Service, a move which the Bath health and medical profession generally opposed. There were also negative

³ Circular 49, *Provision of Additional Training College Accommodation*, Ministry of Education, London, 30th May 1945, (BSU/2/2/23).

⁴ Signed Minutes of Bath City Council Education Committee, 1940-45, (BC/2/1/72/9).

⁵ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.77.

⁶ 'Bath as a centre for Education' Bath and Wilts Chronicle, 29th November 1948, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, (uncatalogued).

⁷ 'Council approve teacher's college plan' Bath and Wilts Chronicle, 18th July 1945, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, (uncatalogued).

⁸ Circular 49.

⁹ Bath Chronicle and Herald, 'Bath as Centre for Education' 29th November 1948.

opinions being voiced in the city, concerned at the ambitious plans for the council and its proposal to support three separate higher education establishments – the existing Domestic Science College and the newly established Bath Academy of Art, as well as Newton Park College itself. In a direct response to these critics Councillor A.W.S Berry robustly stated that:

If it were established, [Newton Park] would mean a number of women would look on Bath as their *alma mater* and they would be walking advertisements of the city. The training college would raise Bath in the educational scale nationally.¹⁰

Within a few years, councillors would be reporting that ‘very encouraging progress has been made in plans to attract people to Bath for its progressive methods of education.’¹¹ But as a result of these ambitions, negativity over expenditure was frequently expressed amongst some members of the council and the public. A letter to the local newspaper, anonymously contributed by ‘The Man in the Street’ stated ‘admirable though it may be to make this city the ‘Oxford’ of the West, the financial burden of such schemes is a factor causing hardships to the majority of ratepayers.’¹²

Civic ambitions were one thing: the reality was that much needed to be done, and time and finances were severely limited. The wording of Circular 49 gives an insight into the haste demanded. It is clear that colleges like Newton Park were established amidst improvisation and uncertainty; ‘if’ and ‘might’ intersperse the lines of the Ministry of Education request:

All Authorities will be well aware of the urgency of this matter from the point of view both of the immediate and of the long term needs of their schools, and the Minister hopes that all Authorities that are able to do so will put forward proposals at a very early date, if only in outline form. It is also desirable that no permanent College should be established with a capacity for fewer than 200 students, but it will not be necessary that accommodation for the full number should be available in the first year. If a site offers reasonable prospects for enlargement e.g. by the addition of huts, it might be possible to make use of premises which would offer immediate facilities for about 100 students, the number being increased to 200 in the second year.¹³

¹⁰ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, ‘*Council Approve Teachers’ College Plan*’, 18th July 1945. Councillor Berry would later be involved in the establishment of the University of Bath, founded in 1966.

¹¹ Bath Chronicle and Herald, ‘*Bath as Centre for Education*’, 29th November 1948.

¹² Bath and Wilts Chronicle, ‘*Education Expenditure*’ 7th March 1949.

¹³ Circular 49.

The suitability of the estate at Newton Park, with its empty buildings, grounds and ample space for development was established, and certainly it was vacant, available and ready to be developed – superficially at least. It had been sold away from private ownership in 1941, and in the interim had been pressed into military service. The Army's presence there had taken its toll, and despite some protection measures such as the boarding up of doors and the creation of temporary outbuildings, several years use as an army site had inevitably damaged the fabric of the estate's buildings. The level of disrepair and neglect discovered there would prove a crucial obstacle to the initial development of the College.

Newton Park's change of use from private realm to public space would become an important aspect of the themes of equality, democratization and citizenship which Dawson espoused as head of the new teacher training College. Her ideas exemplified many post-war ideals and a new vision of democracy. These themes are represented in much post-war rhetoric; a rhetoric in which the public was firmly invested in the aftermath of wartime effort. According to Dawson 'a true aristocracy arises spontaneously and gives unstintingly. It is concerned not with privileges, exemptions and ease, but with duties and responsibilities.'¹⁴

For hundreds of years, the English country house had been an elite space, in which structures of class were rigidly upheld, made manifest in architecture and material possessions. During the early to mid-twentieth century, at a time when many of the certainties of the elite world collapsed, the demise of such houses came about as the owners could no longer afford, justify or manage their upkeep. The long 1950s saw the highest number of such estates leave private ownership, as the trickle of country house sales in the early years of the twentieth century became a flood, in an atmosphere of cultural and societal change. Peter Mandler's work on the nationalisation of the country house cites the high number of such properties which underwent a change of use from private to public in this period. He asserts that the vast majority of these 'took place in the immediate post-war years to 1950, when the pent-up demand for schools, colleges, hospitals and other such institutions was released.'¹⁵ During the war, Mandler asserts, the rapidly

¹⁴ Mary Dawson, Speech, City of Bath Girls' School, (no date specified) 1954.

¹⁵ Mandler, *Fall and Rise*, p.327.

emptying private homes of elite families were 'generally derided as white elephants, symbols of deservedly departed grandeur' and the public at large showed little interest in their demise as family estates.¹⁶

Yet amidst this great change, and the push towards modernity, the sharing of certain traditions was still deemed desirable. An appreciation of the past, of the landscape of the English countryside and heritage could serve as the backdrop for that modernity. Matless affirms that these ideas of shared heritage and history contributed to the building of the post-war world.¹⁷ Country houses rapidly transformed from private homes to public symbols of a new social order. While many country houses were dismantled during this period, where the public became more interested in the wider preservation of country houses, it did so less as examples of an elite lifestyle, but as features in the landscape and heritage of the past, where the architecture and history of the nation might be not only observed and appreciated, but repurposed. Mandler cites a post-war report for the National Trust which stated that 'If country houses were to be preserved, they had to be reused in ways consistent with the radical social and economic changes that are proceeding in all parts of the world.'¹⁸ It was this reuse which Dawson exploited; from the beginning she was alert to these ideas and the advantages of a country house setting and its meanings. As a setting from which to demonstrate the post-war rhetoric of equality and citizenship, Newton Park was ideal. Her students, as representatives of their gender and profession, were encouraged to demonstrate duty and responsibility, as the citizens who would take their place in communities and be the leaders who inspired others to do the same. Their presence at Newton Park underlined the post-war interpretations and meanings of equal citizenship. They were women of differing backgrounds, in training in order to adopt public roles.

The Newton Park estate itself represents a typical story of English country house ownership, its growth and demise over time and its new life as the site of an educational establishment also follows a typical pattern. In the post-war decades, the demise of the country house estate has been traced through study, through literature and through major exhibitions, which describe how the fortified manors of the early modern period and the power houses and sites of influence of the

¹⁶ Mandler, 'Nationalising the Country House', p.99.

¹⁷ Matless, *Landscape & Englishness*, *passim*.

¹⁸ Mandler, *Fall and Rise*, p.324.

eighteenth century, responded to the taxation, wars and changing economic fortunes of the twentieth century. The narrative ends with either complete destruction, change of use, or preservation by bodies such as the National Trust. The final blow is epitomised by the dispersal of everything that remained.¹⁹

The existence of such estates had in the past relied on land acquisition, property ownership and private incomes, which paved the way to local and regional influence and power through political and parliamentary involvement. Many such land-owning families then rested on their wealth, living luxurious lifestyles on diminishing fortunes. By the beginning of the twentieth century, new taxation rules increased their vulnerability to financial pressure. Fortunes were depleted, and a lack of heirs meant there was no-one willing to take on the financial burden. As a result, minor aristocracy in particular, such as the family at Newton Park, were forced to sell their properties in order to pay taxes and death duties. David Cannadine describes the mood of the British elite as it changed 'from confidence to anxiety, buoyancy to pessimism, expansiveness to retrenchment, and acquisitiveness to dispersal.'²⁰ Illustrative of Cannadine's assertions, the relatively small estate at Newton Park, and many others like it, felt the blow of increased taxation all the harder, as their reduced incomes were less able to withstand economic change. For such families, Cannadine asserts that:

The pressure of debt was often at its greatest, the impact of the depression and taxation was most marked, the alternative sources of non-agricultural income were least abundantly available, the room for financial manoeuvre was accordingly the least generous, and decline and fall was in consequence the most poignant and the most complete.²¹

Over the course of the early to mid-twentieth century the trend towards a more democratic society, in which the elite no longer held so much influence, was clear. To some of the declining landowning families, this was a dangerous, even 'evil' shift in society.²² Some, including the owner of Newton Park, Earl Temple, aligned themselves with the British Fascist Party, preferring the option of an authoritarian, patrician past to an uncertain future. Such people, according to Cannadine, were

¹⁹ *Inventory and Valuation of Household Contents, Newton Park Estate 1940, Farrar and Son's Solicitor*, Bath Record Office, Guildhall, Bath, 0525/11/1/1. *Newton Park Estate letters, wills and documents 1940-1941, Farrar and Son's Solicitor*, Bath Record Office, Guildhall, Bath, (0525/11/3/1).

²⁰ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p.118.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.125-6.

²² *Ibid*, p.547.

‘almost without exception the most obscure and obscurantist notables, and all of them held opinions that were a bitter amalgam of paranoia and disenchantment.’²³

At Newton Park, Earl and Countess Temple had died without a direct heir and there was no-one in the family prepared to take on the estate and its debts. Sale was the only realistic option. The final chapter of Newton Park’s narrative as a private space was complete, and sale of the estate included everything the family possessed, bar personal items and heirlooms. Earl Temple had died in 1940, and within a year his widow Countess Temple followed, forcing the sale of the Gore-Langton land and possessions to pay death duties as well as a large debt secured on the property.²⁴ Newton Park itself might have become building land, as suggested by the family’s executors.²⁵ Instead the properties and land were sold, and kept largely intact, by the purchasers, the Duchy of Cornwall. The attraction of this estate, from the Duchy’s perspective, lay in the value of the dairy farms and surrounding land, with the mansion and its grounds and outbuildings an additional and far less valuable acquisition. The main house, surrounding buildings and designed landscape, once the estate’s central symbol of power and authority, and most tangible asset, therefore became the least important part of a valuable land deal. But it was considered an ideal site for the establishing of a new College. As far as the local council was concerned, it fulfilled all its requirements, and this, the least valuable central core of the estate, provided the basic infrastructure required. It was available and empty, and there were buildings, grounds and space to be exploited. Set within a wider landscape, there was a three-storey eighteenth century mansion house, which although modest in size, provided flanking wings to the east and west, surrounded by ample level ground for new buildings and adaptation. There were further outbuildings in the form of a stable and dairy block, two walled garden areas, and even a crenelated tower overlooking lakes and woods. The whole was set in a landscaped park at the end of a mile-long drive. The closest neighbours inhabited the village of Newton St Loe, along another drive, and visible from the main house. Here was a village shop and parish church. The village of Corston lay at the end of another driveway, a winding route ending near the main road into Bath itself. The whole estate, available for lease to Bath

²³ Ibid, p.546.

²⁴ Letter to Darlow Humphries from E Gore Langton, D.W Humphries Papers, Bath Spa University Archive, Catalogue Number BSU 1/1-13.

²⁵ *Newton Park Estate letters, wills and documents 1940-1941*, Farrar and Son’s Solicitor, Bath Record Office, Guildhall, Bath, (0525/11/3/1).

City Council from the new owner, was highly adaptable in a number of ways, and its potential was clear.

And so the choice of Newton Park as the setting of one of the new post-war teacher training colleges, although a practical expedient as far as the local authority was concerned, would be an important aspect of its future identity. From the beginning, the character of the site would become intrinsic to its aims and philosophy, and not just a backdrop for daily life. As discussed, the change in use, from private estate to public domain chimed with the ideals of the post-war world, in which democratic, equality-minded themes of citizenship idealistically prevailed. In Mary Dawson's view, the College's presence in this recently vacated country house was an expression of that equality and citizenship.

Bath City Council, which had leased Newton Park from the Duchy of Cornwall, had acted quickly to put the new training College plan into action. Following the first request for local authorities to answer the need for teacher training provision, site visits were quickly undertaken in order to survey the buildings and amenities to be found there, and members of the city council, including the Mayor of Bath, saw for themselves the possibilities of the estate and buildings.²⁶ On 31st May 1945 the council responded to the Ministry of Education with a letter outlining their plans. There then followed an almost daily flurry of official correspondence about the College, its facilities and its requirements, a frequency illustrative of the haste employed. During May and June 1945 plans for Newton Park itself were made, which envisioned basic alterations and improved supply of vital utilities. By the end of August, the District Valuer's report had been received, describing the site and the basic amenities they had to work with:

An imposing mansion in the Georgian style, of somewhat plain elevation, constructed of Bath stone with a partly slated and partly tiled mansard roof, together with extensive outbuildings, three cottages, model farm, and the remains of the medieval castle of Newton St Loe. The house is finely placed in well-timbered parklands, the foreground sloping to a chain of artificial lakes, and commands attractive views over the valley of the river Avon eastwards towards Bath. It is approached by a drive...terminating in a carriage sweep at the south-eastern and main entrance to the house.²⁷

²⁶ Letter to Councillor Berry, 10th May 1945, inviting him to attend viewing of Newton Park with Mayor and Councillors, with Major Roberts of the Duchy of Cornwall (BSU/2/2/23).

²⁷ *District Valuer's Report on Newton Park*, August 1945, (BSU/2/2/23).

From the beginning, tensions were evident between what needed to be done and what could be achieved in reality. These tensions were sometimes financial, but more often as a result of post-war shortages beyond anyone's control, and the speed with which the council sought to proceed. The Education Committee also needed to staff the College which now existed, at least on paper. The advertisement for the position of Principal, for example, appeared in the Times Educational Supplement on 27th July, 1945:

Proposed New Training College for Teachers. Appointment of Principal. Applications are invited for appointment as Principal (Woman) of the Training College for women, which it is hoped to establish at Newton Park in the near future.²⁸

The council papers for this period suggest the scale of organisation required for such a venture. A meeting agenda from September reveals the amount of work to be done.²⁹ This meeting was required, in one short sitting, to discuss the details of the Valuer's report, the appointment of a suitable architect, the appointment of the Principal, and the type and name of the College.³⁰

The architect appointed was Molly Gerrard, of Bath architect's firm Gerrard Taylor and Partners. This early appointment was the beginning of a thirty-year relationship with the College, with much of that time spent in close working partnership with Mary Dawson. Gerrard would later recall her involvement:

At the end of the war, I was instructed to make a survey, as a matter of urgency, of the mansion and other buildings at Newton St Loe, on the Duchy of Cornwall Estate. The reason was then obscure. The main house had been used by the Army, and a Commando Training School had been in residence...Army stores were in the rooms and there were other signs of Army occupation...directions were chalked on walls, not all directional and a few educational. The castle was derelict, where floors remained we clambered over years of debris and rooks' nests...the staircase had collapsed in parts, so had the roof and walls. No mains services existed – water supply was from a meagre and doubtful reservoir in the field; there was no electricity, gas, or proper drainage... It is not possible to give you even a remote idea of the conditions from which the College was created.³¹

²⁸ Times Educational Supplement, *Advertisement for Position as Principal*, 27th July 1945, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive (uncatalogued).

²⁹ Minutes of meeting, 4th September 1945, Bath Education Authority, (BSU/2/23).

³⁰ Minutes of Meeting, 14th September 1945, (BC/2/1/72/9).

³¹ Molly Gerrard, *The Architect's View*, Newton Park 1946-1967: 21st Anniversary Commemoration Booklet, (Dursley, Bailey & Son, 1967).

Board of Education rules established at the beginning of the twentieth century meant that women's colleges were compelled by law to be led by a woman.³² As such, the position represented the highest level of employment within the training college system, and in this respect it was a desirable role, with greater remuneration, greater prestige and a considerable degree of autonomy. Chapter 3 has also described the kind of highly educated women who were available for such a job. The prospective candidates were required to embrace a considerable challenge, creating an institution from scratch, gathering staff, students, and equipment, in liaison with the local authority and the Ministry of Education. In addition, the successful applicant would be responsible for guiding the College's development in an entirely new educational landscape.

Six women were chosen to be interviewed for the post of founding principal of Newton Park College.³³ Four of these women held doctorates, and the remaining two, including Dawson, were educated to Master's level. All had followed a similar career pattern after graduating from university, initially as school teachers, followed by progression to teacher training, in a representative sample of some of the most well-known training colleges in the country.³⁴ Dr Jennie Aberdein was a Senior Lecturer at Avery Hill College, Dr Elsie Briggs was Vice Principal at Bishop Otter College in Chichester. Dorothea Fleming and Alice Hirst were lecturers at Goldsmiths and Lincoln Colleges respectively, and Dr Elsa Walters was senior lecturer at the Froebel Institute in London. The six women were of similar age, ranging between thirty-six and fifty, and all earned around £500 per annum. The role of principal of the new College at Newton Park was advertised with an annual salary starting at £800. This represents a substantial increase for all of the candidates, at a time when women's pay was significantly lower than that of their male counterparts in the same occupations.³⁵ The successful interviewee for the

³² Christine Heward, 'Women and Careers in Higher Education: What is the Problem?', in *Breaking Boundaries: Women in Higher Education*, ed. by Morley, Louise; Walsh, Val, (London, Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1996). pp.11-23. p.12.

³³ Minutes of Meeting, 19th September 1945, (BC/2/1/72/9).

³⁴ The Froebel Institute, London, (now University of Roehampton) Gipsy Hill College, Kingston (now Kingston University, London); Brighton Teacher Training College (Now University of Brighton); Bishop Otter College, Chichester (now Chichester University).

³⁵ Oram estimates the difference at approximately four-fifths. The salary offered to Dawson was later increased in line with the new Pelham Committee, which set Training College staff salaries and was established a few months before this. The Pelham salaries were intended to be attractive, in order to persuade more experienced lecturers into the training colleges (Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, pp.142-143). The differential between men and women continued; in 1951, Bath Education Committee noted the differences between the three College Principals it employed. Miss Dawson and Miss Neilson (Domestic

Newton Park role, by a unanimous vote, was Miss Alice Mary Dawson, aged 42, who was then employed as Vice Principal in London.³⁶ She would carry on in her post at Whitelands until January 1946, whilst simultaneously beginning the work of developing the College at Newton Park.

The progress of the foundation of the College in these early stages was followed closely in the local press. The coverage further illustrates the haste involved in establishing the College, and the range of tasks which had to be carried out at every level. On 20th September 1945 the *Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle* had reported the names of the interview candidates.³⁷ An advertisement for the first three members of staff, in English, combined Rural Studies & Biology, and Education, appeared in the newspaper at the end of October.³⁸ In December it announced the College's opening date, stating that 'a limited number of places are still available for students'.³⁹ On 19th January, it informed the people of Bath that the first students had arrived for:

The training college for women established at Newton Park, former residence of the Earl and Countess Temple of Stowe. But as the structural alterations and decorations, and the installation of mains services have not been carried out, the girls are being billeted in the city.⁴⁰

On the same day, the *Times Educational Supplement* carried an advertisement for lecturers in Art & Craft, Physical Education and Dancing, Music, History and Geography.⁴¹ This was a period which demanded great resourcefulness, and Mary Dawson's letters, writings and speeches reflect her own determination to support her students, fulfil her responsibilities and build this new community. Yet there were many obstacles to be overcome and on a number of differing fronts. Looking back at these early months in a speech at the end of her career, Dawson recalled that:

This plan did not seem quite so crazy then as it does today because we had just lived through a war in which men and women all over the world had often been asked to do the impossible. I believe Winston Churchill said 'The

Science College) both earned £1200, whereas Mr Clifford Ellis at Bath Academy of Art received £1300. (Minutes of Meeting, 16th May 1951, (BC/2/1/72/12).

³⁶ Minutes of Meeting, 28th September 1945, (BC/2/1/72/9).

³⁷ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, 'Applicants for College Principal', 20th September 1945.

³⁸ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Advertisement*, October 26th 1945.

³⁹ Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle, *College to Open*, 14th December 1945.

⁴⁰ Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle, *Students enrol at New College*, 19th January 1946.

⁴¹ *Times Educational Supplement*, 19th January 1946, Bath Spa University Archive, Mary Dawson Collection (uncatalogued).

difficult we can do at once, the impossible takes a little longer'. I was only being asked to do the difficult.⁴²

Almost immediately it was realised that the site at Newton Park needed extensive preparatory work, and moving there would be delayed as further investigation had revealed a host of problems. Bath Education Committee decided to go ahead, despite the issues, and passed a resolution recommending 'that students be admitted as from January 1946 under the general supervision of the lecturers even though the premises are not yet ready.'⁴³ The list of problems found at Newton Park was long, and included issues with water, gas and electricity supplies. Some of the buildings were in a bad state of repair, long-term accommodation was needed, equipment was in short supply, staff had to be interviewed and billets for the students were needed immediately. The local press followed the developing story of Dawson and her students with great sympathy. It seemed that their struggles were the same as everyone else's. Nationally at that time, there were chronic shortages of everything from building materials to furniture. Post-war austerity meant that food rationing continued to challenge day to day living, and the initial post-war feeling of enthusiasm was severely tested. On a wider scale, although the promise of change and the attraction of the 'new' was a key theme of 1946, this feeling was severely challenged under the continuing stringencies.⁴⁴ The general public's enthusiasm began to crumble under 'the ongoing misery of it all'.⁴⁵ Such was the national shortage of accommodation, for example, that the press and public followed sympathetically the plight of homeless families. The situation became so severe that a squatting campaign began. Nationally, squatting became a legitimate solution to the post-war housing crisis, demonstrating the existing public desire for action. Everyone felt they had a right to a home, especially the men and women returning from war service. Post-war shortages were experienced by everyone, leading to a sense of frustration which was widely reported in the media. Jeffreys reiterates just how far resources needed to stretch and points out that the limited supply of building materials was a reality throughout a society attempting to build anew, as well as attempting to rebuild 'an

⁴² Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.4.

⁴³ Minutes of Meeting, 17th October 1945, (BC/2/1/72/9).

⁴⁴ Sissons, French, *Austerity*, p.135.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.137.

infrastructure of factories, schools, hospitals and homes.’⁴⁶ What one group received was felt keenly as a further deprivation to another. There were post-war shortages in almost every commodity. The Ministry of Education circular had hinted at some of the issues to be faced by those whose task it was to implement the massive teacher-training programme and to take the plans forward:

It will clearly be difficult to open a new Training College, even in improvised buildings, by the autumn term 1945, but where proposals of this kind are put forward the Minister will give every possible assistance in order to bring them rapidly into operation. It is, for example hoped to make available a certain amount of miscellaneous equipment from surplus Government stores.⁴⁷

The hope of making ‘available a certain amount of miscellaneous equipment from surplus Government stores’ merely scratched the surface of what would be required; the College was initially equipped with only a Principal, an idea and the beginnings of a plan; everything else would have to be sourced amidst major difficulties. Permission was required for acquisitions from ministries and local government departments. The wait for such permissions was frequently long and frustrating and nothing could be actioned without them. Resources were one issue. More complicated was that everything a new college required in a practical sense went alongside new theories and ideals brought about by the major restructuring of education as a whole. Much that the local authorities were being asked to do was untested, unplanned and unconsidered at this initial stage. The Ministry of Education’s letter laid out the demands for the tangible resources of the College – the space, the people and the equipment required. The wider recommendations of the McNair Report had also to be considered, and so the complexities of long-term expansion of the College needed to be brought into the development plan. Beginning with forty-five students in January 1946, interviewing for a further intake would need to happen almost immediately. Dealing with their current issues served to highlight the greater issues to follow. Overall, the McNair committee’s recommendations called for the raising of the status of training colleges, through the provision of research partnerships with universities and joint working arrangements which would lead towards a wider profile overall. This was to be done through the planned ‘Area Training Organisations’, which grouped a

⁴⁶ Jefferys, *War and Reform*, p.60.

⁴⁷ Circular 49.

region's colleges under the remit of a university. Some of the universities then created their own Institute of Education to oversee and foster best practice in training, research and cooperation between the university and the teacher training establishments. This basis of research and cooperation across all settings was intended to foster the development of education as a whole.⁴⁸

The official and theoretical plans for the establishment of the new College were in place, but the physical space, a home, would prove more elusive than originally supposed. Since Newton Park had been found unusable as college premises in its current condition, temporary office accommodation was provided on the top floor of a house at 3, Wood Street, Bath. Dawson described the situation in this letter to her friend and confidant, Hannah Lawrance:

I didn't sleep last night. First, I discovered that I'd accepted two unqualified students and that I ought to have got the Ministry's OK for them. I intended to wire them not to come but the Director said not, he would support me...We've taken the chance and the lassies are coming. We'll get the Ministry's sanction later. Then I realised with a shock that if the building doesn't start this month we shan't be in for April. That gave me many sleepless hours because I can't teach 50 girls, Biology, Music art craft etc in a Gas Demonstration Showroom with plush seats and no desks. They might as well stay home.... I was too tired to post the enclosed, so am adding another line. The great day is over. Students were very quiet and scared at first but are now unfreezing and seem charming. Only two are unhappy with their billets. Many were, I think, relieved to find that we were all real. There's been such a muddle over letters and correspondence that they'd begin to wonder to what they did belong. My words of wisdom on the date of opening of College at NP appeared in the local Press yesterday, and today there's a photograph of the girls assembling...The students at Whitelands sent me a wire...it warmed my heart...just arrived as we were about to start. Bath was all agog! Even the station porters started giving advice! The press tried to gate-crash on my first meeting with the students, but I ordered them out.⁴⁹

On the occasion of their first meeting in January 1946, the Principal called on a spirit of joint endeavour, and told her students that together they would be 'pioneers' in their new venture. Dawson addressed the group and set the challenge before them, not just as the first cohort of students, but as a community facing considerable practical limitations.

⁴⁸ Ian George Booth, *The control and administration of training colleges from the McNair report (1944) to the Education (No. 2) Act, 1968*, with special reference to the policies of the A.T.C.D.E. (unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham University, 1981).

⁴⁹ Mary Dawson, *Folder of letters 'Early Days', 1946*.

The difficulties they faced are highlighted by Dawson's comment that 'We were in a unique position...forty-five students, a principal, one member of staff and no buildings whatsoever.'⁵⁰ The situation is evident in the hastily prepared plans for the first week:

Friday 18th	Meeting, lecture, lunch at British Restaurant, Collect Ration Cards, meet staff
Saturday 19th	Lecture, Churches in Bath, lunch, Visit Pump Room and Bath
Sunday 20th	Tea at Pump Room
Monday 21st	School Practice begins
Tuesday 22nd	School Practice
Wednesday 23rd	Lectures, lunch, students visit Newton Park. ⁵¹

Such piecemeal arrangements continued, and space for lecture rooms, canteen facilities and billets were found around the city, some in accidental and serendipitous circumstances. In May 1946, the local paper reported that:

The new training college for women teachers, which is to be established at Newton Park when the necessary alterations have been done, after months of difficulties over accommodation, had a stroke of good luck. Only about a week ago it was learned that 101 Sydney Place, which had been an Admiralty hostel run by the YMCA, was being vacated and on Monday, the principal of the College and the staff moved into it. New Term starts on Friday for the students, who during their first term have been doing practice work in Bath schools. They will now be able to start their academic course. Today (Friday) marks the beginning, in the real sense of the word, of the College. Until the weekend the College office was in attic rooms at 3, Wood Street, and some lectures were arranged for the students in the Pump Room. The girls are billeted in Bath houses. Miss Dawson told a representative of this paper that she was glad to have moved out of her 'garret'. She was sure they would all be very happy at Sydney Place though so far there was not a 'stick of furniture' in the house. The building work at Newton Park has not yet started.⁵²

Initially lacking even a central meeting place, let alone the 'home' which Newton Park represented, Dawson could not build a community of place. Instead she encouraged the community of shared endeavour, which through continued adversity, ultimately forced a closer bond between students and staff. It is worth

⁵⁰ Mary Dawson, *The History of the College 1946 – 1956*.

⁵¹ *Programme for the First Week January 18th 1946*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, uncatalogued.

⁵² Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Accommodation for College*, May 6th 1946 The college would go on to occupy fourteen different sites across Bath, before the eventual removal to Newton Park in mid-1949.

reiterating, as Dawson herself did, the piecemeal nature of some of the arrangements and the difficulties of bringing the College together in one place:

Accommodation so urgently needed was difficult to procure because Bath was suffering from an acute shortage of space caused by the Admiralty in Bath. The students lived in billets, went out daily, sometimes long distances to schools, attended lectures at the Gas Demonstration Showroom, the Pump Room, Argyle Chapel, drank mid-morning National Cocoa at the Queen's Restaurant in Wood Street, lunched at the British Restaurant at Parkside, and every Sunday afternoon gathered together at 4.30pm in the large drawing-room of the Pump Room, where the Townswomen's Guild gave them tea and endeavoured to give opportunities for meeting, chatting and entertainment.⁵³

The practical challenges were daunting. In addition to the several student hostels around the city, the 'College' used fourteen separate sites in Bath, as well as further use of village schools for an initial period of classroom experience. In later years, Dawson recalled the story of finding their first premises:

They were looking all over the place because Bath was packed full of Admiralty and there was no place available at all and our domestic warden was walking along Sydney Place...one day when she saw a furniture van. Now a furniture van, in those days, outside a building was a phenomenon and she went into 101 Sydney Place. There was a woman there and she asked what they were doing. She said ..."We have been a YWCA place, but this is the end". So Miss Salter said "Let me have the key, we want it", and she came home with the key and I got a furniture van and moved in with my borrowed desk and orange velvet chair which we bought at an auction sale. You couldn't buy anything in those days. And we just moved in...We had literally squatted in this building with no rights at all...I was ignorant and desperate and have always thought that we were the first squatters in Bath...We contacted the Minister of Education, Ellen Wilkinson, and asked her to requisition the property as a college. The Minister wired the Town Clerk to requisition the property on her behalf. I believe he wired back doubting her powers of requisition and she overruled him, but anyhow we got in.⁵⁴

In mentioning that they were 'the first squatters in Bath', Dawson draws on the activities of the squatting movement which, as discussed above, was at that time emerging as a practical solution to the national housing crisis. Amidst the acute shortage of accommodation then being experienced, squatting in empty buildings received a great deal of press and public sympathy, as a valid answer to the

⁵³ Dawson, *History of the College*.

⁵⁴ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

immediate problem. It is also interesting to note that Dawson went directly to the Minister of Education, in order to persuade the local authority. The Ministry of Education was then a new entity, which replaced the Board of Education as the means to push through the changes to education in the post-war years. Chitty states that these changes envisaged 'a national system, locally administered', in what was intended to be 'a progressive partnership between the central department, the local education departments and the teachers.'⁵⁵ The balance of this 'tripartite partnership' was being established at this time,⁵⁶ and there are further examples of this within the Council minutes, as communications pass between central government, local authority, to the colleges and back again.⁵⁷ In reality however, whatever the relations between these partners, the materials for rebuilding simply were not available amidst the national shortages.

The delays continued. After the first term of 1946, it became clear that the promise of a move to Newton Park within six months was an impossibility. Dawson wrote 'in April, when the students were on vacation, the situation was so acute that the governors seriously considered the advisability of closing College, a step which they were loath to take.'⁵⁸ Dawson wrote that she felt a personal responsibility towards her students:

It was really the commitment to those forty-five people that made me go on. I said to the governors, "this College will have to pack up. We cannot carry on, unless you find me somewhere where I can teach these students. This is not a College".⁵⁹

Whether the determination came from the governing body or from Dawson herself, carry on they did. Some did not commit themselves to the task, as Dawson wrote:

The strains on the staff of any new college are severe but at Newton Park they were greatly aggravated by these conditions and there was much unsettlement including a number of staff changes. There were a few, however, who succeeded in weathering the storm and it is to these that the

⁵⁵ Clyde Chitty, 'The Role and Status of the LEAs: Post-war pride and *fin de siècle* uncertainty.' *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2 (2002) 261-273, pp.261-262.

⁵⁶ Chitty, *Post-war Pride*, p.262.

⁵⁷ An example occurs in 1956, when Dawson 'is invited to take additional students' by the Ministry. The LEA then responds with expansion plans, which are carried out at Newton Park College. Minutes of Meeting, 19th September 1956, (BC/2/1/72/15).

⁵⁸ Dawson, *History of the College*.

⁵⁹ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

college is heavily indebted for their faith in the vision of what might be at Newton Park.⁶⁰

As one delay led to another, the changing moods of determination, frustration and resignation can be traced through documents, speeches and personal correspondence. Dawson wrote to her friend Hannah Lawrance 'if only I could get some equipment; Every single item is questioned at the Guildhall – every blessed thing.'⁶¹ She also later recalled that 'even for the purchase of so small an item as a tea towel, a permit was required and was most difficult to obtain.'⁶² All requests and business passed through various meetings, whether with staff, governors, or council committees. The Education Sub-Committee meeting of 4th April 1946, for example, gives an indication of the council oversight in operation. This meeting discussed the water supply at Newton Park, the Architect's report, hostel accommodation, term dates, staff appointments, the purchase of tea and coffee, equipment required and much else besides.⁶³ Under the 'equipment' section, the minutes record the passing of a 'resolution recommending the purchase of 3 tennis nets, one duplicator, one gross of cutlery, one radio-gramophone, one radio, 2 filing cabinets, 2 pianos for hostels, 4 pianos for Newton Park.'⁶⁴

To add to the frustrations, there were regulations in place for the new teacher training colleges which differed from those which governed colleges under the Emergency Scheme. As Mary Dawson herself pointed out:

It must be remembered that the College, not being part of the Emergency Scheme, was not able to partake of all the administrative shortcuts arranged for the Emergency Colleges, and its difficulties in relation to furniture and equipment, and rationing of all kinds was considerable.⁶⁵

Dawson's manner when dealing with the many challenges give a strong indication of her character. She wrote in February 1946:

A month ago, my governors asked B to look into the possibility of requisitioning a large house known to be vacant, for a hostel. I was present when he rang the Town Clerk first. The Town Clerk said he would look into

⁶⁰ Dawson, *History of the College*.

⁶¹ Letter, Mary Dawson to Hannah Lawrance 19th January 1946.

⁶² Dawson, *History of the College*.

⁶³ Sub-Committee Meeting 4th April 1946, City of Bath Training College Minutes September 1945 – July 1950, Bath Spa University Archive, (BSU/2/2/77).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

it. Over and over again since then, I have asked him about it. B said he would ring up the TC again. At last, whilst I was in the same room, he did. Today, we learned that the TC did not want it for housing – too big – and we could have it if we wanted it. I rang up the owner...and found he had concluded to sell it and it was now in the Auctioneers hands. I stopped that and seized the key and went over it. It's very suitable for housing 25 – 30 girls...I find that the governors have been having a gorgeous joke at my expense. This house...belongs to an old solicitor who hates Education and is difficult. Everyone fears him. I, in my sweet innocence and ignorance, bearded the lion, got the keys...and have hung on to them ever since. It evidently pays to be stupid sometimes! I seem to get nowhere, yet Miss Lewis thinks I've been just wonderful. I can't see it myself. I just go on stolidly shoving a bit here and pushing a bit there.⁶⁶

A month later she wrote:

I've won my first victory! I've successfully negotiated...for a large house, as a hostel. It was the biggest fight to date. He was most difficult! For the first half hour, he wouldn't look at me. I listened to a tirade on teachers, birth control, nationalisation etc, but in the end he softened, suddenly, ABSOLUTELY. The governors are delighted and so is the Director – and so am I. It was a gleam of hope! I was utterly exhausted afterwards, but triumphant inside!⁶⁷

These letters reveal Dawson's character and attitude to her task. There are allusions to the heroism of struggle, of a foe outwitted, and the psychology of planting ideas of patient stoicism against an enemy. It also her ability to negotiate obstacles in her path, whether they concern people, or situations; by claiming 'idealism' or 'ignorance', she is able to gain 'victory'. But this was at the beginning of a very long process, and the pattern of struggle followed by small incremental victories continued. Difficulties were presented on every side. When it came to the teaching accommodation at Newton Park, there was the need for new buildings for which one set of restrictions applied, whilst the adaptation of older extant buildings presented others:

All the work on the castle, which was being adapted as a library had been held up because it had been discovered in the course of the adaptations

⁶⁶ Letter, Mary Dawson to Hannah Lawrance 2nd March 1946. The 'B' referred to is H W Brand, the Director of Education in Bath.

⁶⁷ Letter, Mary Dawson to Hannah Lawrance 19th March 1946. The College governors were led by Alderman G D Lock throughout Dawson's principalship. He was also chair of the Education Committee for a large part of Dawson's years of leadership.

that the building was of very great historical interest, and experts from the Ministry of Works (Ancient Monuments) had to be called for advice.⁶⁸

It has been noted that Bath was one of only two Local Education Authorities to act immediately after the Ministry of Education request in May 1945. Their response even pre-empted a national call to establish colleges under the Emergency Scheme; council minutes show that on receipt of this request, the education committee 'Agreed that no further action be taken, as Bath is already making its contribution in the new Training College at Newton Park.'⁶⁹ In the haste to establish the College, the difficulties inevitably challenged everyone involved, and as previously mentioned, the council at least understood this, having decided to go ahead despite knowledge of the practical problems the site itself presented. The council's educational ambitions on one hand, and governmental demands in the new educational landscape on the other, created opportunity, but also the tensions which had to be borne by those involved.

Dawson used this situation as a stage on which to create her narrative. She described the first three years of the College as 'slow persistent growth in the face of very great difficulties...emergency arrangements were constantly being made to help the premature baby survive.'⁷⁰ In December 1947, Dawson's report to the Education Sub-Committee recorded:

...her concern at the serious effect on both students and staff of the disadvantage under which they had to continue to work, particularly the lack of library facilities and the difficulties presented by such separated buildings.⁷¹

Meanwhile the situation demanded that student numbers rose steadily. Within two years, numbers had risen to the expected 200 students, with the further attendant problems of finding sufficient housing, staff and teaching placements. By the summer of 1948, Dawson spoke of the ongoing situation:

I used to preach very loudly that buildings did not matter, but people did. Now only too well do I know that buildings matter because of what they do to people. Scattered buildings are bad because they make it almost impossible to build up a corporate spirit and traditions without tremendous

⁶⁸ Gerrard, *The Architect's View*.

⁶⁹ Minutes of Meeting, 12th January 1946, (BC/2/1/72/10).

⁷⁰ Mary Dawson, *The History of the College*, 1959.

⁷¹ Minutes of Meeting, 3rd December 1947, (BC/2/1/72/10).

effort, continuous unremitting effort on the part of the staff. Circumstances continually defeat one. They are bad because they cause endless frustration and pinpricks, and waste of time. Molehills become mountains...During the first year, we were tremendously helped by the faith and hope we had in Newton Park. We had the thrill of feeling that we were doing a pioneering job. But progress is essential to pioneers, and as time goes on and Newton Park has seemed as far off as ever, the situation has become not easier but more difficult.⁷²

Endless frustration, mountains, pioneers, and victories. Dawson's use of language in the narrative of the College is further evidence of the tensions inherent in the situation, and of her interpretation of herself and her students as heroines of that narrative.

Mary Dawson had been promised that Newton Park would be ready within six months, but the 'intolerable delay' extended further and further.⁷³ By September 1946 the second cohort of students was enrolled, but the academic year ended without any change in the *ad hoc* arrangements. The Chronicle speculated that nationally, perhaps they were:

Attempting to do too much all at once. Without proper premises and enough trained teachers the great reforms of the 1944 Education Act may well suffer all over the country from the disabilities of getting off on the wrong foot. It is indeed ironical that Bath, having responded promptly to the Government's call...should have had 18 months of frustrating delays.⁷⁴

This indicates the amount of work demanded of the local authorities at the time. In Bath, the ongoing issue of regeneration after the 1942 bombing and a chronic shortage of housing stock went alongside all the business of the education committee. As Simon asserts, there was 'too much of everything to be done at once'.⁷⁵ The *City of Bath Education Committee Development Plan*, issued in 1946, gives an idea of the task. Over thirty-five pages it lists plans to oversee the expansion, building, rebuilding, adaptation and development of the city's schools and colleges, and to update provision for all age groups in response to the national

⁷² Mary Dawson, Speech, *Newton Park College Commemoration Day*, 3rd July 1948.

⁷³ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Further Delays for College*, July 18th 1946.

⁷⁴ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Frustrating Delays*, June 20th 1947.

⁷⁵ Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940 – 1990*, (London Lawrence and Wishart, 1999) p.89.

need for educational improvement.⁷⁶ It references the need for schools to be built 'for the children of the new housing estates'⁷⁷ and notes that one of these was 'planned for 1948/49'.⁷⁸ Mary Dawson would actually later deliver the opening address at what became Newbridge School, but not until 1953.⁷⁹ The sheer amount of work to be carried out is also demonstrated by the Council Minute Books; the 904 pages of business dealt with in 1945 had increased to over 1400 pages the following year, before reducing in size and scope very gradually in the following years.⁸⁰

As the first group of Newton Park College students approached qualification, the local press contributed the opinion that:

Paradise is not yet attained – More than 40 girls will be leaving Bath this coming winter without having had a taste of the paradise that was promised them...they are victims of Ministry delays, succeeded by shortages of labour and materials.⁸¹

There were further calls within the council to 'halt Bath education spending...at this time of national crisis', but other councillors bluntly declared such statements 'tripe' and the spending continued.⁸² In this case, it was felt that 'money spent on schools and colleges was robbing the housing programme', and indicates tensions between the Education Committee and the council as a whole.⁸³ There is little doubt that this period of extended exile and frustration for Newton Park College would contribute to the themes of community resilience cited in former students' oral testimony. The student body was bolstered by tropes of cheerfulness in adversity and resolve against the odds. The press saw them as victims; Dawson presented them as survivors; perhaps they saw themselves as heroines. They are certainly representative of the women Rowbotham describes as the 'resourceful rebels' of the era.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ BSU/2/2/295 City of Bath Education Committee Development Plan, 1946, *passim*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.33.

⁷⁹ Mary Dawson, Speech, Opening of Newbridge Junior School, 13th November 1953.

⁸⁰ BSU/7/1 Bath City Council Minute Books for 1945 – 1968.

⁸¹ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Bath and Wilts Chronicle, Paradise not yet Attained*, July 5th 1947.

⁸² Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Calls to Halt Spending*, September 18th 1947.

⁸³ *Ibid*.

⁸⁴ Rowbotham, *Century of Women*, p 281.

In December 1947 the Chronicle reported that:

The College has now been in existence for nearly two years; it is doing excellent work under trying circumstances; and there does at least seem hope that it will move into Newton Park towards the end of 1948.⁸⁵

Mindful of the accusations of 'poverty' which had been aimed at the women's training colleges in the McNair report, Dawson could see the long-term potential of the College site. She was ready to apply her own philosophy to the combination of place, space, and history that it provided. As Massey asserts, 'the past, [would] help make the present'.⁸⁶ Matless argues that landscape has been the site where 'English visions of the past, present and future have met'.⁸⁷ He further states that in the post-war era, the English landscape served as a theme for debates and discussions around national identities, history, modernity and ideals of citizenship.⁸⁸ Dawson recognised this combination of history and modernity, in her determination to use what she considered the best of the past to contribute to her visions of the future. Here was an ancient landscape, a symbol of an England that had almost been lost amidst the destruction of war; the signs of the threat it had all faced were still present and highly visible.⁸⁹ The post-war thirst for Utopia may have been thought of by some as an 'airy vision' but to the historian and educator Dawson, here was a very real model of what the world now promised.⁹⁰ The new community could be built on the remnants of one now old and obsolete; it would be a place for the new citizens of the post-war world to flourish. The ethos of her new College was laid out in a number of documents written at this period, and the theme would develop further in the years which followed. In 1945 the house and grounds were a deserted shell, but this was not just an empty space, it was a space which could be symbolic of the era – a new community could be grown here to complement, and be part of, the brave new post-war world.⁹¹

Dawson was not alone in her thinking, since the theme of citizenship was an important one throughout this period, accompanying the values enshrined in post-

⁸⁵ Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Good News for College*, December 24th 1947.

⁸⁶ Massey, 'Places and pasts', p.187.

⁸⁷ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, *passim*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹ Bath and Bristol had both been bombed during the war, and the visible evidence of multiple air raids along the river corridor between the two cities would be present for some years. The Bath Blitz, available from <http://www.bathblitz.org/> [Accessed 27.9.17].

⁹⁰ Jefferys, *War and Reform*, p.8.

⁹¹ Bartlett, *Post-war Britain*, p.8.

war legislation. Furthermore, it was an idea also reflected in post-war planning and visions of the countryside, identity and belonging.⁹² The countryside was 'a symbol of a timeless and shared national past.'⁹³ The *Town and Country Planning Act (1947)* and the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949)* both illustrated the underpinning idea of citizenship and a more democratic sharing of resources in the post-war world.⁹⁴ Weight and Beach further suggest that the growth of democratic organisations at this time was a further exploration of citizenship, a theme taken up by both Maggie Andrews and Caitriona Beaumont. Andrews' work demonstrates the ways that the Women's Institute emphasised the duty of its members to engage as citizens, and provided programmes, projects and various avenues within their structure for this to happen. Beaumont's analysis underpins this work through the study of a range of women's organisations who, in their support of their membership, focussed on citizenship and civic education and the importance of equal contribution in a democratic society; this sense of identity and belonging was an important part of renewal after the Second World War. It is also notable that at that time, a variety of different bodies were preparing the way for post-war changes; Martin Lawn describes the work of the Army education department during the war, who utilised a programme known as *The British Way and Purpose* to encourage discussion on current affairs among serving soldiers at home and overseas.⁹⁵ Through a series of pamphlets and films, the role of the individual in the collective pursuit of 'rebuilding the UK' was promoted, stimulated by discussion of topics such as education in a democracy, citizenship, preservation of the countryside, town planning and post-war rebuilding.⁹⁶

The war had been a joint endeavour, and in peace there was an expectation that the fruits of societal change would similarly be shared. Under such expectation, everybody would be free to take the opportunities peace implied. Dawson stated that 'the present doctrine is that every person is as good as his neighbour.'⁹⁷ In a

⁹² David Matless, 'Taking Pleasure in England: Landscape & Citizenship in the 1940s' in *The Right to Belong: Citizenship & National Identity in Britain, 1930-1960*, ed. by Weight, Richard; Beach, Abigail (London: I B Tauris, 1998) pp.181-205, *passim*.

⁹³ Sian Edwards, 'Nothing gets her goat!' The Farmer's Wife and the duality of Rural Femininity in the Young Farmer's Club Movement in 1950s Britain, *Women's History Review*, 26.1, (2017) 26 – 45, (p.28).

⁹⁴ R Weight, A Beach, *The Right to Belong: Citizenship & National Identity in Britain, 1930-1960*, (London, I B Tauris, 1998) *passim*.

⁹⁵ Martin Lawn, 'The British Way and Purpose: the spirit of the age in curriculum history', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 21:2, (1989) 113-128, p.114.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.119; Simon, Conservative measure, p.42.

⁹⁷ Mary Dawson, Speech, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, 27th July 1958.

magazine article describing the developments at Newton Park, the author echoes Dawson's ideas, stating that:

All over the land country houses are being converted into schools, hospitals and institutions and 'God bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations' is as obsolete as the stagecoach.⁹⁸

This accords with the attitude of the era expressed by David Matless when he states that 'one site and person are conspicuously absent from the new land of [post-war] reconstruction: the country house and the dominant squire. The country house set in its park belongs already to the past.'⁹⁹

The theme of citizenship went hand in hand with a sense of responsibility for rebuilding. Globally, in 1945, there was a sense that, having survived the conflict, individuals and communities had a shared responsibility to ensure that the mistakes of the past were not repeated. The extreme right-wing tendencies which had led to the destruction of people and their shared heritage made societies very aware of the dangers of following a fascist dogma and the totalitarianism such ideology provoked. If this was to be avoided in the future, then people should be educated in a way which encouraged free thought, of benefit to communities, combined with a responsibility of action and the capacity to think for themselves. This became even more important with the looming threat of the Cold War. There was a focus on the individual as the building block of a community, and of the individual's role and responsibility. In the founding of Newton Park College, these tropes of freedom of action are uppermost. The philosophy is expressed in much of the College documentation at the time; in Mary Dawson's speeches and writing, her letters, as well as in the way her students were selected.

The philosophy of responsible citizenship is expressed in student writing as well as the wider curriculum aims, and the language of freedom, autonomy and hope for the future are evident. A student from the first intake of forty-five young women, writing about the inaugural meeting of the College in January 1946, recalled the evident idealism of the occasion, during their first meeting with their Principal. This young woman recalled:

⁹⁸ *The Somerset Countryman Magazine*, April-June 1951, pp.39-42, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, (uncatalogued).

⁹⁹ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 221.

The calm but inspiring voice of Miss Dawson...as she told us of all the ideals which we would be struggling for in the years to come...We were beginning to feel that we belonged to, and were creating, a little community of democratic people. All the freedoms of the *Atlantic Charter* are enjoyed here. Libert , Egalit  and Fraternit  are practised to the full. Besides these freedoms and rights is something else which is ever-growing, something which struggled for nourishment during the intellectual famine of the last world war, dark memories of which are fast receding. It is something which succeeded in growing even inside the prisoner-of-war camps in Germany – the need to learn and go on learning, to improve oneself, and to help others improve themselves, the will and cheerful confidence to solve almost impossible problems, determination, and an exhilarating sense of adventure, with a sure hope of ultimate success in our endeavour. Everyone at heart was firmly convinced by Miss Dawson’s words of assurance and her strong belief that Newton Park held within its bounds a wealth of possibilities.¹⁰⁰

These original students, in citing the *Atlantic Charter*, express many of the ideals of the age. Written in 1941, the Charter defined the Allied goals for the post-war world; ideals which were later carried forward and incorporated into the founding goals of the United Nations. Together, the *Charter* and the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights* expressed many of the thoughts of the peacetime generation, with emphasis on freedoms, fairness and a desire that lives should be lived without want or fear. The Declaration further affirmed ‘the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women.’¹⁰¹ These concepts underpinned the philosophy which millions wished to carry into peacetime, and made their way into the ideas and plans for social change. The inclusion of these ideas into this student’s writing gives an indication of their prevalence in the post-war world. Such messages of equality and commonality of purpose had filtered down through society as a whole, and pervaded the curriculum and teaching ethos of the Newton Park College from the beginning. Deputy Principal Eileen Melhuish wrote:

If treasured freedoms are to survive these [students] need to be men and women of tolerance, courage and imagination; with the self-discipline and initiative to work together for the common good; with minds trained to think reasonably and clearly even in moments of tension, and with strength of conviction to resist the power of propaganda and mass emotion.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ ‘*Impressions of the first months at College*’, College Magazine, January 1947, Mary Dawson Collection.

¹⁰¹ *Preamble to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights*, available from <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/html> [Accessed 19.1.17].

¹⁰² Eileen Melhuish, *Introduction to Teaching*, p.1, Mary Dawson Collection.

She continues the theme by stating that 'every community needs leaders of vision and integrity...developed to their full potential, who can inspire others and contribute new creative thought to local, national and international problems'.¹⁰³

The shared ethos of the College, and a particular passion of Dawson, was the idea that responsibility was to oneself as well as to others, and each had a personal responsibility to learn and develop throughout life. Education, it was stated 'concerns not the mere acquisition of technological and other skills, but the full flowering of each individual personality in body, mind and spirit.'¹⁰⁴

The setting and landscape of the Newton Park campus also played its part in the establishment of the curriculum and philosophy and Dawson keenly exploited the site's advantages. One of the students recalled what this meant to her personally:

I think the sheer beauty of the place, the sheer tranquillity of it. The sense that it was a place where culture and history mattered. I mean, I know the people who lived here in the past, yes, were wealthy and all the rest of it, well alright...but you were surrounded by so many lovely things, and these were the things to aim for. Whatsoever things are of good report. I think, think on these things...I think we were all in some awe of it. Heaven.¹⁰⁵

Dawson used these ideas when describing the philosophy of the College, stating that:

It was recognised that this beautiful environment must, of itself, educate the students. One of the first aims then has been to preserve and develop the aesthetic amenities at Newton Park. We aim to use this rich environment as much as possible...this fine heritage is constantly available. There is a sense that the students are heirs of a rich culture, with its roots deep in time...which they in turn will hand over to new generations of the students and to the schools.¹⁰⁶

The ways that the environment would 'of itself, educate the students' are hard to grasp, but the students themselves appear to confirm the idea:

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Dawson, Newton Park *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1948.

Throughout our two years, we appreciated the changing beauty of the seasons, the space of the estate and the historical associations of the area.¹⁰⁷

The weather has been beautiful for many days now. Imagine what Autumn does to this place...I wish everybody could see it.¹⁰⁸

Well, it was a whole new world really. We had far more freedom as individuals; it was a very beautiful place to be.¹⁰⁹

Others confirm the feelings they had on first seeing Newton Park, especially in the contrast it represented to places they had previously experienced:

It was overwhelming because being an urban bunny it was the first time that I'd ever been in the country and the sheer beauty of the place knocked me sideways. Unlike the other first years I was put in a hall at Newton Park right from the start which meant I had three years of parkland and lakes and cuckoos and kingfishers.¹¹⁰

I walked up the drive on a beautiful autumn morning with the mist just rising, up to Main House and, kind of, my jaw dropped.¹¹¹

As a history graduate herself, Dawson was interested in the historical background of the built heritage and landscape around her:

The students and staff who are now experiencing the atmosphere at Newton Park are very strongly aware that there is a great wealth of history here to be discovered. I feel that we have a duty to posterity to preserve it.¹¹²

'Preserving it' meant care and use of the landscape as well as the discovery of the estate's history. Dawson's personal papers are testament to the fact that many years of research took place in order to unearth the background of the estate in its years of private ownership. Very little was known at the time, beyond the basic

¹⁰⁷ Anne, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

¹⁰⁸ Linfoot Letters 1950-1952, Bath Spa University Archive, (BSU/1/31).

¹⁰⁹ Liz, female student, 1961-64. Oral testimony.

¹¹⁰ Naomi, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹¹¹ Harry, male, Newton Park College staff, 1965. Oral testimony.

¹¹² *Letter to E Gore Langton from Mary Dawson 18th May 1951.*

information of ownership and more recent events such as the sale of the estate. Realising this, Dawson began to research and discover details of its past, with the help of the College's history tutor, Mollie Humphries, and her husband Darlow Humphries, a governor of the College. Darlow Humphries worked for several years gathering information, and together, they painstakingly fitted a jigsaw of knowledge together. This knowledge was used in publications, and in drama productions which brought to life aspects of the estate's story. Through this research, contact was established with descendants of Earl Temple. It seems that the family themselves were unable to provide information about the history of the estate, beyond a few anecdotal details. Letters to Mr Humphries from members of the family recount these anecdotes, and also ask for information to be passed to them; it would seem that family papers, and the contents of the Newton Park 'Muniments Room' had been lost at the time of sale in 1941.

The knowledge gathered also helped in spreading the word about the College and the kind of work which took place there, using everything that the site offered.

From the beginning, there were enquires and visits:

from people of all nationalities in large numbers – the city, the British Council and Bristol University discovered that foreign visitors were greatly interested in the way in which we were making use of traditional buildings in educational developments. In 1953 the College was visited by the Education Ministers of India, Pakistan, and other Dominions, the British Council sent overseas students and visitors, including His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie.¹¹³

H.I.M Haile Selassie had been exiled in Bath during the Second World War. He returned in 1954 on an official visit from Ethiopia, and was given the Freedom of the City. During a day of ceremony, he was shown the highlights of the city in terms of education, health and industry. His itinerary featured the newly opened Moorlands Primary School, new wards at the Royal United Hospital, the Stothert and Pitt factory, and Newton Park College.

¹¹³ Mary Dawson, *The History of the College 1946 – 1956*. Selassie had been resident in Bath during the Second World War, and returned in October 1954 to be granted the freedom of the city. During his visit, he was shown examples of the best the city had to offer, in terms of education, health care and industry. He was shown the Royal United Hospital, the newly opened Moorlands Primary School, the Stothert & Pitt factory, and Newton Park College.

In order to understand the background of the estate and to facilitate these enquiries and visits, Dawson commissioned Darlow Humphries to write up all the research in a history of the estate. Her own papers hold many of these documents, photographs, letters, in addition to collated accounts of the research process. Humphries' resulting publication '*The Manor of Newton St Loe*' appeared in 1956, to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the College. But the 'great difficulties in historical research because of the lack of reliable testimony' continued, and even after strenuous efforts, the result was a small pamphlet of eight pages. Evelyn Gore Langton wrote to Dawson expressing thanks for the copy she had forwarded on Humphries' behalf, and said 'It is a pity more could not be found about the history of [Newton Park] after it was bought by the Langton family.'¹¹⁴ In fact, the Dawson and Humphries collection of papers show that the research process carried on beyond the mid-1950s, as new information slowly emerged over the following decade.¹¹⁵ The more information was gathered, the more the College took ownership of the legacy of the estate and its history. Dawson's inference was that the preservation of the history was due to Newton Park College; they knew more than the family which had owned it. Furthermore, having been extensively researched, Dawson claimed their information to be the most reliable.

In addition to researching the older history of the estate, Dawson's papers show her personal determination to preserve the newer story of the College itself. From the very beginning, she kept and preserved all the documentation, forms, photographs and records of the College, recording its progress throughout the years of her tenure as Principal. To sit alongside the history of the estate itself which she had helped to gather, Dawson was determined to preserve the historical record of the College's development, an action which Caine and Spongberg see as part of the 'feminist impulse' to chronicle empowering campaigns.¹¹⁶ The documentary evidence upholds Dawson's ideas about the importance of women in public life, the contribution they could make, and their duties as citizens. This was a history she could gather herself, and she ensured that the day-to-day business of the institution was recorded and preserved over the years, until her retirement in 1968. This collection reveals the annual cycle of seasonal celebrations, events and performances alongside images of all the buildings, old, new and adapted. All

¹¹⁴ Letter, E Gore Langton to Mary Dawson 15th July 1956.

¹¹⁵ D.W Humphries Papers, Bath Spa University Archive, (BSU1/1-13).

¹¹⁶ Caine, *Biography*, p.44. Spongberg *et al*, *Women's Historical Writing*, p.182

are assembled and in an orderly fashion, filed or scrapbooked, with annotations and detailed information appended. For example, under a photograph of the hall, she herself has written: 'Interior of the Assembly Hall looking from the stage: This building had to serve as a gymnasium from 1949 – 1956. The new gymnasium was built as a minor work's project under £10,000 in 1956.'¹¹⁷

The gathering of the Newton Park history, both ancient estate and new College, thus allowed Dawson to control the narrative as gatekeeper, further strengthening its public and democratic use. Importantly, Dawson's purpose in knowing the details of the past at Newton Park was by no means deferential. By the painstaking research and the long process of gathering information she was taking ownership of the knowledge, as well as its distribution and use. Newton Park College was made possible due to the decline of a landed family; a representation of the old world. Mary Dawson's women represented a new world. A gentleman's statement of patriarchal power belonged to the past, and instead became a showcase for women's agency in general and one woman's authority in particular.¹¹⁸ Newton Park College was described in 1953 as 'an unusually good example of effective and intelligent adaptation'¹¹⁹ at a time when so many country houses and estates were being appropriated and repurposed.¹²⁰

In her role as founding principal of a women's college, Mary Dawson demonstrated her own ambition and her own sense of personal worth. Her writings show that she did not believe that leadership in society came as a right of birth, but as an earned privilege borne out of strength of character. She reiterated this point many times, stating:

In an authoritarian society, [leadership] was buttressed by class, tradition and professional prestige...the present doctrine is that every person is as good as his neighbour, and leadership has to emerge from sheer quality of personality.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Mary Dawson, *Newton Park College buildings development*, Photograph Album 1946-1966.

¹¹⁸ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p.221.

¹¹⁹ Times Educational Supplement, *Learning Amidst Elegance: Bath Residences Transformed*, 6th January 1953.

¹²⁰ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p.118. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p.222. Mandler, *Fall and Rise* pp. 311-353.

¹²¹ Mary Dawson, Speech, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, 27th July 1958.

She had demonstrated a particular strength of character and ambition in her own life, and was firm in her belief that this could be learned by her students. She said of them:

I can say that, knowing these young women as I do, I do not despair of the future of this country. They are courageous and cheerful, they carry heavy responsibilities lightly; they are independent and thoughtful. I believe we have reason to feel confident in these young citizens of tomorrow.¹²²

Mary Dawson brought all her experience and ideas, as well as her personal philosophy together in the founding of Newton Park College in 1945. These ideas featured the progressive education of the whole person, of the importance of equal citizenship, and of the best of heritage and the past, as a secure springboard for the future. In 1948 she wrote:

The education of human beings is a vastly complicated matter; it embraces the heart and spirit, as well as the body and mind... Furthermore, for true perspective, we must think of it as a process that begins with birth and ends only with death... A concern for other people, a sense of responsibility – these are the marks of true aristocracy – an aristocracy of the spirit. It can emerge from any walk of life, and is attainable by any of us if we so aspire.¹²³

The history and context of the country house is at the centre of British culture, and perhaps represents the best and worst of the national story. The theme of recent democratic involvement of many, following centuries of ownership by a few, is an ongoing part of that story. Newton Park College was established at a specific time and place, when ownership of such properties was passing from private to public use. This is a significant aspect of its founding and development in that the space itself frames the theories of equality and citizenship which were explored there. Becky Conekin asserts that the post-war idea of a New Jerusalem, expounded in these ideals, may have been ‘an imagined world of equality and freedom for all’, but the proposal and the perception of the ideals was important, as the Newton Park students’ own descriptions of ‘a little community of democratic people’ illustrate. Hindsight and the passage of time might reveal a different narrative, but the hopefulness and self-confidence engendered at the time should not be

¹²² Mary Dawson, Speech, West Twerton Girls’ School Prize Giving, 21st October 1948.

¹²³ Mary Dawson, Speech, City of Bath Girls’ School, (no date specified) 1954.

dismissed.¹²⁴ The College's presence on a country estate was an important part of its identity, and served as an integral factor in the development of the community which grew there. In its use of the estate, the College was part of a national trend which saw elite spaces more democratically exploited by wider sections of the public, and in that way, opening access and leading ultimately to a greater understanding of such spaces.¹²⁵

Mary Dawson's first cohort of students began their training careers just eight months after the College had been initially proposed. The identity and philosophy of the new College emerged at this 'opportune moment'; a moment which combined those feelings of 'common humanity and deeper purpose' amidst post-war restructuring.¹²⁶

The criticisms of the McNair Report had been pointedly gendered towards the female communities, and saw only the negative aspects of such institutions. Edwards suggests that 'the narrowness of the teacher training world and its invisibility to the public gaze encouraged stagnation and resistance to change.'¹²⁷ Dawson herself was determined to move away from the 'narrow' model, adapting to change and demonstrating engagement with the wider educational environment. She had experienced the distinct *advantages* offered by women's colleges, so her own College would be influenced by the communities in which she had already been involved; close-knit and supportive, yet innovative and liberal in outlook and involved with work beyond their own walls. She stated that:

I experienced enlightened colleges which provided a model, as well as illiberal college situations which taught me what to avoid. In respect of the community, the blueprint for the new College was largely gained from another institution, Whitelands College; scholarly men and women chose to serve in these institutions, recognising their enormous significance in the emerging democracy of the twentieth century.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Becky Conekin, *Autobiography of a Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.80.

¹²⁵ Peter Mandler lists many such spaces, such as Gosfield Hall, Essex, Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire and Bramshill, Hampshire, which became a nursing home, a prep school and a police college respectively. The City of Bath's own art College was based at Corsham Court, Wiltshire. Mandler, *Rise and Fall*, p.327.

¹²⁶ Fielding *et al*, *England Arise!*, p.128.

¹²⁷ Edwards, *Women*, p.50.

¹²⁸ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.6.

Mary Dawson identified the strengths that a community of like-minded women could bring. Having drawn inspiration from some of her previous colleges, and most especially Whitelands, she understood the part that a supportive environment played in building individual and institutional confidence. In such communities, composed mostly of women, she had seen staff and students encouraged to reach their potential, to fully explore their skills and knowledge, and to enjoy equality of opportunity.¹²⁹ From such a beginning, many women had progressed to careers in educational leadership; the five other candidates who were interviewed for the role of principal at Newton Park College are all examples of women who had benefited from promotions to positions of authority within the women's training college system.

Mary Dawson's prior experience had taught her that the most effective educational establishments were those with a strong sense of joint endeavour. Her first task was therefore to establish such an atmosphere, along with a corporate identity and spirit. Throughout her career, whether as part of university, school, or training college, Dawson had observed some of the shared virtues that the most effective places had exhibited, such as sensitive leadership, a sense of community based on common goals, and staff and students engaged in a collective purpose. She had observed that 'in a small college community, students feel more involved and responsible'.¹³⁰ In terms of her personal ideas in relation to the community ethos, she said:

A college community is not something outside of ourselves, an impersonal 'it' but something essentially 'us'. All the time, it reflects our qualities and characters, yours and mine, and the more fully we give to it, the richer it is, and the greater our return. A community has high standards and principles, a vigorous and full life within, and a generous giving attitude to the world outside.¹³¹

These common goals feature in College papers, in the speeches Dawson gave, and in the testimonies of former students. A document on the *College Aims and Philosophy* asserts that:

¹²⁹ Hilton & Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries*, p.189.

¹³⁰ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.16.

¹³¹ Mary Dawson, Speech, Dedication to Mollie Humphries, 21st September 1961. In 1961, Mollie Humphries, the History lecturer, died suddenly in Autumn 1961. She had been an integral part of the college life from February 1946, when she became one of the first appointments to the staff. The day after her death, at the beginning of the academic year, Mary Dawson addressed students, staff and governors and paid tribute to her colleague.

Living together is also a creative relationship and the teacher has a concern to guide and stimulate healthy classroom communities. The richer the students own experience of a rich and satisfying community life the more able she will be in accomplishing this in the classroom. For this reason, great importance is laid on building such a community in College...First and foremost, in relation to the general ethos of a community, an atmosphere of confidence which gives students security, and courage to make mistakes, must be engendered. This depends on mutual trust, and respect of students and lecturers.¹³²

The strong themes which run through all Mary Dawson's writing emphasise shared endeavour, the quality of the individual, personal responsibility and earned achievement. The group of young women who were involved alongside her discuss their own development and professional lives in similar terms; having come through the war, they were familiar with difficulties:

We were used to challenges...and we, on the whole people didn't grumble...you know food was rationed, clothes were rationed, paper was hard to come by. You...you learned to be very economical in every, every way...and your lecturers taught you to be so from teaching...you know you didn't waste paper; it was still quite a precious commodity.. we'd been through a war, there were challenges... but we were very tolerant. And we enjoyed ourselves. And our lecturers were very, were very good, and very kind.¹³³

The women who had led the learning communities Dawson had known, were, as Chapter 3 has shown, among the best educated women of their generation. Having been educated themselves, and then facing a limited choice of careers, many had settled in the field of teaching. From there, they could inspire their colleagues and the women around them within school and college environments. Dawson had admired these influential women, and frequently cited their contribution to the development of education in the interwar period. Here were women to be emulated as role models. Dawson wrote:

An immeasurable debt is owed in education to the generation of unknown women – teachers, inspectors and so forth, who, in the early half of this century, liberalised our infant schools – transformed them into the free and happy places they are today. I could also speak of what education owes to the Girls Grammar Schools and the great succession of headmistresses...

¹³² Mary Dawson, *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1954.

¹³³ Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony.

impressed by their deep sense of social purpose and responsibility, their values and their standards.¹³⁴

Those who were the headmistresses of their own schools were in a position to positively recommend teaching to their pupils. They had achieved much in their own careers, demonstrated their own agency and enjoyed influence and independence. And teaching had the potential to be an even more influential role under the new conditions of service stated in the 1944 Education Act. The choices – of where, when and how long to teach – now rested with the women themselves, rather than being foisted upon them as they had been for the previous generation under the iniquities of the marriage bar.

The influence of these women was admired, not only by Dawson, but by former students as well, who recalled their own schools and the personalities they had encountered there. One student recalled the educator Geraldine Lack, the headmistress of the grammar school to which she had transferred, after beginning at a Secondary Modern school. She said, ‘you know but it was just wonderful being with all these wonderful women’. These women had nurtured this particular student’s love of literature and encouraged her to continue into higher education and apply for Newton Park College.¹³⁵

This sense of being supported within a community of inspiring women and tutors is borne out by the Newton Park students too. One recalled that:

It was very much smaller, very much more intimate. I felt even while I was here that the people who were dealing with us – were all lecturers – they weren’t just clever, they were wise. The people who taught us here – there was definitely a real sense of vocation and a real sense of standards and I think you don’t, you just don’t, fall below a certain standard than what was expected.¹³⁶

Newton Park College, despite the necessary *ad hoc* arrangements, attempted to draw the scattered college together. In the longer-term building of a strong community, college principals in general had long recognised the value of

¹³⁴ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Barr’s Hill School Prizegiving*, Coventry, 21st October 1965.

¹³⁵ Alison S, female student, 1963-66. Oral testimony. Educationally, Lack’s ideas echoed those of Mary Dawson herself – her obituary stated that ‘the opening of pupils’ minds, the widening of their intellectual horizons and the enriching of their values and tastes were of far greater importance than amassing results’. (The Times (London, England) *Obituary: Geraldine Lack.*, Tuesday, May 27, 1997; pg. 21; Issue 65900.)

¹³⁶ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

traditions and events. Dyhouse states that ‘they welcomed the evidence of fellowship and community feeling, which they deemed essential in the building-up of ‘tradition’ and institutional confidence.’¹³⁷ Dawson herself had witnessed such annual celebrations and occasions at Whitelands College, which had a long-established tradition in the May Day ceremony; an elaborate festival which consisted of ‘a church service, processions, and dancing round a maypole’, with the addition of an elected May Queen decked out in lavishly embroidered silk robes.¹³⁸ The creation of such practices was therefore an accepted method of establishing a community spirit. Some of the traditions established at various colleges were nonetheless site-specific – for example the May Day ceremony at Whitelands had been instigated after a suggestion by John Ruskin in 1881. It was therefore possible, in conducive circumstances, to create an elaborate tradition from scratch.

Dawson’s event of choice at Newton Park was the establishment of Commemoration Day, a celebratory occasion which brought together students, staff, their families and the various supporters of the College. Crucially, from the very first year, it was held at Newton Park itself, as a taste of what was to come once the site was ready to become the College. She would later say that the first Commemoration Day ‘symbolised the real creation of Newton Park as a community.’ On that day, the site itself was used extensively, and the event spread into the landscape and grounds as well as using the built heritage and history of the space. Commemoration Day remained the most important annual event throughout Dawson’s principalship. She described the idea behind its origin:

It was felt that something in the nature of a Festival Day must be started to help build up morale among students, who must have been disappointed over the conditions in which they found themselves. I felt a vital need for us to meet together as a community for some festive occasion, a red letter day, and our first commemoration symbolised the real creation of Newton Park as a community.¹³⁹

Memories of the very first Commemoration in June 1947 were described by one student in the first College magazine:

¹³⁷ Dyhouse, *Students*, p.89.

¹³⁸ Edwards, *Women*, pp.28-29.

¹³⁹ Mary Dawson, *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1948.

We all trailed up the Newton drive and into the house, where we opened our thermos flasks and sandwich packages and picnicked on the floor in the main house – ending with a last course of strawberries and ice cream – the first most of us had tasted since 1939.¹⁴⁰

Thus, the sense of a community with its heart at Newton Park was fostered, even for the first groups of students who would never experience it as their own college home. But the space itself, and the place that it would become, were firmly established in the minds of all concerned through the forging of strong memories such as these. Through these memories, hearts and minds could be called back to that time and place, and the overwhelming taste and symbolism of those ‘first strawberries’, which are imbued with the power to bring back the ‘vast structure of recollection’ of the day itself. Personal and community memory was created through such events, and with each year and each event, layers of memory were added by each cohort of students. Newton Park itself, with its striking grounds and buildings, holds a special place in the minds of the students and staff who return there to give their oral history interviews, and it is clear that their memories of such an environment are crucial in evoking a strong sense of community, of belonging, and of attachment.¹⁴¹

Those ‘red letter days’ were held at Newton Park, even though it was home of the College in name only, and the memory of them was emphasised in later years. The picnic, teas, and a dance and drama element were included from the beginning, and once the College was fully in residence, the event grew to include displays of work, more complex drama productions and music performances. The event took place across the whole site, with its increasing number of buildings. Former students were also always welcomed back, and the Old Students’ Association was an important component of the community from the outset. In newsletters and speeches, Dawson used memory and pride in achievement to draw back her students, to recall their college days and the particular space they had known.

¹⁴⁰ Various Authors, Newton Park College Magazine, January 1947.

¹⁴¹ Gerome Truc, ‘Memory of places and places of memory: for a Halbwachsian socio-ethnography of collective memory International’ *Social Science Journal*, 62.203 (2011) 147-159. Stephen Rose, *The Making of Memory: From Molecules to Mind* (London: Bantam, 1992). Shelley Trower, *Place, Writing & Voice in Oral History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). Michael Rossington, Anne Whitehead, *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). Anza Mehnert, ‘Memory & Heritage’, *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 65.3 (2011) 85-91.

In 1948, more than two years after the founding of the College, and with the move to Newton Park still a distant prospect, the summer Commemoration Day event included a performance of an elaborate Elizabethan Masque. Dawson understood the degree of effort involved in such an ambitious project, and humorously stated:

We feel that it is worth the effort. Students are only at College once, and this occasion, the only one at which they can all do things together, does more than any other to help us feel that we are one community. Furthermore, such occasions are an essential part of students' college experience, and one which they will recall all their lives with great happiness. Some local farmer is reported to have said this week "That there College! It's costing a mint of money, and what's the end of it? Nothing but a lot of ninnies dancing with bare feet on the lawn!" So now I invite you to watch the ninnies.¹⁴²

The Bath newspaper later commented:

Sunshine, bright with the promise of summer, broke through prevalent clouds to bless the heroic endeavours of [Newton Park College] who, on Saturday afternoon, gave that elaborate entertainment – an Elizabethan masque – on a 'building site' at Newton Park...It took courage to essay such a production and to risk the tragedy of a wet day, for the College Commemoration celebrations.¹⁴³

The Bath townhouse at 101 Sydney Place had served as the main college building for three and a half years, and in the Summer vacation of 1949, removals lorries left there to transfer everything to Newton Park, in time for the beginning of the autumn term. It had been a long and challenging beginning for the new College, and although Dawson had clearly waived, she continued to lead positively. The initial difficulties were drawn into the overall College narrative:

Necessity being the mother of invention, it may well be that good and strong traditions are evolving from the present difficult situation, which will continue to enrich community life when the College is finally completed.¹⁴⁴

In conclusion, despite all the early delays and the problems the local authority faced in bringing its early plans for the College to fruition, their plans began to see success. With Mary Dawson as principal, a community of people steadily grew. A

¹⁴² Mary Dawson, Speech, Newton Park College Commemoration Day, 3rd July 1948.

¹⁴³ Bath & Wilts Chronicle, *Golden Age at College*, 5th July 1948.

¹⁴⁴ Dawson, *History of the College*.

shared purpose brought everyone together, centred on the site at Newton Park. The community events already established, served as punctuations in the yearly cycle, which in the absence of a specific space, became the way that a sense of unity was engendered. The traditions consisted of a church service in the autumn term, a carol service at Christmas, and the Commemoration Day event in June. In their broad thrust they collectively adhere to the middle-class ideologies and values of the time, and are not untypical of tropes of cultural reproduction which existed across the educational field of the post-war period.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately it meant that once Newton Park was finally fit for purpose, these annual events and traditions were already established, providing a framework from which to develop the corporate life of the College. The students themselves recognised the difficulties the College faced; the situation was explained to each of the first few groups as part of their induction into college life. Students remember being shown around Newton Park, stating that 'we must have come into the house and walked around rather a wreckage of a place...Well we believed that we would get out there.'¹⁴⁶ They were also under no illusion about the difficulties that the staff faced 'It was really necessary...to hold us together because we were scattered.'¹⁴⁷ Having established the College under very trying conditions, the local authority, Dawson, the staff and the students could now work to shape the institution and put educational theory into practice. The pattern of growth and development begun in the first three years would continue through necessity, and the following chapters outline the ways those developments took place.

¹⁴⁵ Edwards, *Women, passim*.

¹⁴⁶ Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 5

The Long 1950s for Newton Park College – Development and Diversification

You are growing up in a rapidly changing and very complex society which in spite of its perils, offers you manifold opportunities for a full and abundant life denied to earlier generations...You can have the interest and satisfaction of a career or some form of public service. But to achieve this end, you will need to have a trained and disciplined mind, and the will and capacity to make those choices that will lead to abundant living...Abundant life or mere existence? And it is with this hope that I conclude – that you may all live abundantly all your life, and find in the careers that you choose the happiness and deep satisfaction that abundant living gives.¹

Because we were a new college we had the advantage of being unhampered by traditions or by personal prejudices...and a profound belief in academic freedom. This gave a new college a wonderful opportunity to rethink its curriculum from first principles.²

Mary Dawson passionately upheld the importance of the teacher in shaping the future for society. As well as being agents for change, teachers held important positions of responsibility within their communities. As empowered citizens, the teachers she trained upheld many of the ideas of equality which had featured in the push towards emancipation in the twentieth century, and they were able to take advantage of education, training and employment. Because of the changes in the educational world, teachers were also in high demand; the position provided flexible employment which would also prove specifically favourable to women. This chapter discusses the ideas of citizenship which prevailed in the long 1950s, and the ways that for women, in particular, these ideas could be encompassed in the choice of teaching as a career. It describes the development of Newton Park College from its official opening in March 1950, and the ways it used its status as a community of women to expound a specific view of citizenship in the period of post-war reconstruction. The second part of the chapter then deals with the ways that Dawson sought to raise the status of the profession she served, through her attention to the selection of candidates for training, her theories of teacher

¹ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

² Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.9.

education, and the underpinning theories of child development she espoused. The final section explores the wider educational landscape, Dawson's networks and realm of influence, and the ways this was utilised to expand the work of the College.

As the previous chapter has shown, the early phase of the College presented a number of challenges. Dawson would later use these experiences to promote her philosophy of responsible citizenship and to strengthen the growing sense of community among students and graduates of the College. She characterised the period between 1946 and 1949 as the College's 'heroic stage'. Newton Park was the 'promised land'. Drawing on somewhat epic and emotive biblical language she said:

We have known what it is to live in the wilderness, and we now appreciate our Promised Land the more because we suffered so much before...Years in the wilderness are very expensive of human material.³

She would later say that:

I have always felt a certain satisfaction that the College had difficulties in its early stages. It seems to me, looking back, that the overcoming of challenges, the seizing of opportunities, the steadfast pursuit of a vision of what ought to be, has helped us all to make the College what it is. I am glad there is this strong fibre built into our foundations.⁴

It was this 'fibre', along with a discourse of struggle and achievement that was instilled in the students in the growth and development of the College. Dawson stated that 'the fact that we have had to fight so hard to create a community spirit has given College an increased awareness of its value...'⁵

In September 1949, the staff and students finally moved to Newton Park, where builders were still present.⁶ During the first winter at Newton Park, work steadily continued in readiness for a grand opening event, to take place on 2nd March 1950. Her Royal Highness, Princess Elizabeth, the Duchess of Edinburgh, later

³ Mary Dawson, Speech, Weston-super-Mare Girls' Grammar School, 26th October 1950.

⁴ Browne & Moon, *Interview with Mary Dawson*.

⁵ Mary Dawson, Speech, *Newton Park College Commemoration Day*, (no date specified) 1949.

⁶ Dawson, *History of the College*.

Queen Elizabeth II, was invited to perform the opening ceremony and so completion of key buildings was targeted for that date.⁷ The assembly hall, designed and overseen by Molly Gerrard, was built during the two and a half months before the March opening, with workmen tidying the site on the morning itself. The main house had been repaired and partially furnished; the stable block was adapted for use as classrooms and a dormitory for ten students, and lighting had been designed to complement the exterior of buildings. Gerrard designed sympathetic alterations to the existing buildings, as well as entirely modern new buildings as additions to the landscape of Newton Park.

It was at this point, according to Dawson that 'for the first time, a real community spirit developed at College.' She wrote that:

Reflection on the history of Newton Park College at once shows how deeply the unusual conditions of its foundation and existence have affected distinctive traditions. The situation has always been so complex that the College has held on to established and successful traditions with unusual tenacity because of the unity they contributed... the pattern of College social events has remained fairly consistent since the early days.⁸

These events also forged distinct memories for the College members now established at Newton Park, which in turn could be drawn upon by Dawson and her students in later years. One particular student wrote to her parents in December 1952:

Last evening carol singers came to College to sing to us. They stood in the inner hall while students sat on stairs, music room, outer hall and alcoves. It was lovely, and as Miss Dawson said, something we shall always remember.⁹

In her oral history interview, sixty years later, she recalled the event as 'magic' and 'beautiful'.

Establishing traditions helped to create a sense of continuity and a corporate spirit of joint endeavour. At the same time, Dawson stated that 'students are aware of living in a growing college, in itself a hopeful and exciting experience'. There

⁷ Minutes of Meeting, 7th December 1949, (BC/2/1/72/11).

⁸ Dawson, *History of the College*.

⁹ Linfoot Letters 1950-1952.

remained a constant emphasis on change and development, and the need for growth as demand for teachers remained high; the ethos of Newton Park College could adapt quickly to these demands, pre-empting or embracing change as required – through a combination of Dawson’s own ideas, as well as the needs of local and national government to constantly increase teacher numbers. For example, the College began taking male students onto Rural Science courses from the mid-1950s, and by 1960 all its courses were mixed, accepting both men and women as trainee teachers. In its initial stages of development, Mary Dawson had also been adamant that male staff would be beneficial to College life, citing the advantage of a more balanced, liberal-minded community. This was part of her determination to avoid the criticism of insularity that the all-women colleges had previously received. This decision presented her with yet another battle, but one she was determined to win. The Ministry of Education demanded that the staff of a women’s college should be all female, serving under a female head. Dawson’s response was swift:

I am having a surprising number of applications for lectureships from men. The Education Office, which deals with these things in the first instance, yesterday as a matter of course sent off letters informing them that men could not be considered. When I heard this, I got the clerk to send letters to them all, saying that this was a mistake and enclosing application forms. I feel that two or three men on a staff, if they were the right men, might be a great asset and help to give us a balanced community. They must be, of course, men willing to work under a woman.¹⁰

And so men were employed on the College staff from the beginning. Dawson’s response was borne of her own experience and philosophy. In the interwar period, the tension of male staff serving under a female principal had been considered insurmountable, but Dawson was determined; having found ‘the right men’, the chosen staff team appear to have worked well and cohesively. Former students state frequently that Newton Park was ‘a happy College’ with a strong staff team.¹¹

Both male and female former students identify the ‘family atmosphere’ which existed in the College community.¹² They also describe Dawson as a caring Principal, but not in a maternal way, or in reference to her gender. Elizabeth Edwards postulates that women principals encouraged a ‘culture of femininity’, but

¹⁰ Letter, *Mary Dawson to Hannah Lawrance*, 23rd January 1946.

¹¹ Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony. Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹² Bill, male student, 1963-66. Oral testimony.

this is less visible within the structure of Newton Park, where the emphasis was couched in terms of the community and the communal rather than the maternal or feminine.’¹³

The students who lived under these conditions voiced an appreciation of the supportive atmosphere, describing it as ‘caring’ and ‘intimate’. Spencer *et al*, and Bone, see this as an aspect of faith-based Colleges, but clearly it is also a basis of many other kinds of community.¹⁴ The closeness of the small community, which at this time stood at around 200-300 students, was viewed positively in the early years, although this would later change – ‘it meant you were on a par [with the staff]’ – according to one student.¹⁵ In hindsight, amusement is expressed about some of the rules, for example that ‘Lights Out’ was fixed at 10pm. Interviewees state that they only find it odd compared to student freedoms today. At the time, they were, as they admit, ‘biddable’ and felt cared for, rather than subject to undue restriction. Any dissent came from older students – ‘some of the students who had worked before college found the rules and regulations irksome but the people who had come straight from school thought they were very reasonable.’¹⁶

When the College was founded, the age of majority was twenty-one – by the time Mary Dawson retired, it had been lowered to eighteen. Students who attended two-year college courses in the long 1950s would have arrived, trained, left and been employed in schools before being considered fully and legally adult. Meanwhile, tutors stood *in loco parentis*. The student testimonies reflect this level of care, and their attitudes towards it:

I couldn’t believe that we were free to go into town if we wanted to! I felt it was like skipping school – it seemed all wrong.¹⁷

I was very biddable, I just assumed adults knew more than I did and it seemed to work alright.¹⁸

Now that was another thing that was nice, even the people like the chief cook, they were wonderful people in their own right. Miss Sully was

¹³ Edwards, *Women, passim*.

¹⁴ Spencer *et al*, *Alumni Voices, passim*; Jennifer Bone, *Our Calling to Fulfil: Westminster College and the changing face of teacher education 1951 – 2001* (Bristol: Tockington Press, 2003). *passim*.

¹⁵ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

¹⁶ Margaret, female student, 1949-51. Written testimony.

¹⁷ Jan, female student, 1963-66. Oral testimony.

¹⁸ Teresa, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

absolutely lovely. You could always go to Miss Sully, you know, and I remember on our final teaching practice, her coming round our rooms at night, "Now you need to get a good night's sleep, would you like some hot milk?". You know this was way outside her duties. They looked after you; there was a thoroughly caring atmosphere.¹⁹

But I think the main difference was that they looked after us...and then suddenly I mean we were getting old anyway, it didn't worry us, but we were adults and we looked after ourselves...but it was wonderful at the beginning because we got all of our meals, when we came to Langton...all of our meals were put in boxes at the weekends went up into our kitchens, little jars of baked beans and loaves of bread...and, everything you could think of really...that we needed, which was good...and the meals were good as well because they used the farm, we had rabbit stew and everything useful like that from there, from the farm.²⁰

So the people in charge of us were *in loco parentis*, which I think made a heck of a difference...really you know we were really looked after.²¹

Well, I suppose in those days, girls were more closely looked after, and it was like being in charge like a parent really, so you didn't want anybody to go out and get in to some sort of trouble that they wouldn't have got in to if they'd been at home. Some of them did, but it was that, it was like a parental thing, loco parentis, isn't it? Looking back now I can see why it was like that.²²

As an example of the degree of care and support which existed within the College community throughout the long 1950s, Dawson's personal papers include a number of hand-made greetings cards. Skilfully executed with watercolour illustrations and careful lettering, they include get well cards, birthday greetings and a series of Valentine's cards. These have been added to a large scrapbook, alongside the documents, letters and photographs which trace the development of Newton Park College. One card, in a heart shape, features Christmas greeting from the students to Dawson herself. Another is illustrated with a watercolour of tip-toeing students in the room above the principal's own quarters. They are holding their shoes aloft, and attempting to leave the unwell Dawson undisturbed

¹⁹ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

²⁰ Teresa, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

²¹ Anne, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

²² Ann, female student, 1951-53. Oral testimony.

below; her dog, Clover, sleeps in the basket at her side. The preserved Valentine's and birthday cards are written as though from Clover to Dawson, with tongue-in-cheek poems, jokes and quotations. The artist is not known or recorded, but preservation of the cards suggests that the sentiment was clearly important and valued by Dawson, as much as the artist who produced them.²³

It was Dawson's feeling that the College community, and the setting it inhabited, were a transforming combination. She described this sense of potential and place during a BBC broadcast in 1950. Standing at the head of the lake, beside the Castle library, she said 'Imagine a girl from a crowded industrial area coming and living here for two years. What will it do to her?'²⁴ She was perhaps describing herself. She too was a girl 'from a crowded industrial area', and her own life and experiences in education had enabled rich learning experiences, financial independence and leadership opportunities. Her own students did recognise the value of their own experience but perhaps not at first. One wrote, several years into her own career 'I remember when I was at college how I used to wonder what was the use of this and the use of that: I see only too well now.'²⁵ Newton Park became their space when they arrived there as new students, and it continued to be so, recalled in their own memories and Dawson's College newsletters to the Old Students' Association members.

The use of the place and space of Newton Park itself was, as previously stated, part of the philosophy of the College. The community consisted of the people, their shared sense of purpose, and the surroundings they inhabited. These ideas were laid out in the *College Aims and Philosophy*, authored by Dawson, which drew on educational theory, psychology, and her own wide experience.²⁶ It also outlined the advantages of the particular environment of the college campus as intrinsic to the College's aims. Another member of staff, the Art lecturer Kate Crofton, described the 'wild loveliness' of the landscape and the pleasure and inspiration it offered, in terms of amenities and the raw materials for art.²⁷ Crofton used the

²³ *Scrapbook 1, Archive 1945-1959. Scrapbook 2, Archive 1960-1966*, Mary Dawson Collection.

²⁴ Mary Dawson, *Script for Radio Broadcast, BBC Woman's Hour*, Recorded 27th January 1950, Broadcast 2nd February 1950.

²⁵ Letter from a former student, 1st February 1968, *Scrapbook 2, Archive 1960-1966*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, uncatalogued.

²⁶ *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1948, *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1954. Mary Dawson Collection. Each version is broadly the same, with amendments according to current practice.

²⁷ Kate Crofton, *Newton Park 1946-1967*, booklet. Kate Crofton also wrote school resource books based on the inspiration from nature. Kathleen Crofton, *Sources of Inspiration: Creative Work in the Junior School* (London, The Educational Supply Association Ltd, 1955). Kathleen Crofton, *Wood*, (London, The Educational

outdoor environment itself as a space in which to explore the possibilities of art. In fact Dawson and all her staff set out to 'use this rich environment as much as possible.'²⁸ Indicative of her progressive philosophy of teaching as a whole, Dawson said that 'a number of traditional subjects formerly studied in a bookish way, begin to have new relevance' through this style of experiential learning in the environment.²⁹ She wrote that, working with her staff and the architect Molly Gerrard, 'one of the first aims...has been to preserve and develop the aesthetic amenities at Newton Park.'³⁰ As Dawson had described, the College community and its people were 'heirs of a rich culture', and it was a culture with a range of advantages and possibilities.³¹ The use of this rich culture was yet another way of signifying ownership, just as the discovery of the history of the estate demonstrated ownership within an atmosphere of democratic citizenship.

In pursuit of these ideals, Mary Dawson utilised every aspect of the College environment. Dawson stated that students, in living and working amidst the atmosphere of Newton Park 'learn something of the art of gracious living, and poise and dignity.'³² To other audiences she stressed the natural environment, the history of the buildings or the wide-ranging amenities. All this was used to educate the students. Froebelian theory taught an appreciation of space, air and nature; Biology took place throughout the campus landscape; art and craft took place in the outdoor environment using natural materials; history, architecture and culture was studied through the College buildings. There was a working farm, and a space dedicated as a primary school garden, where students could learn skills they could transfer to the classroom environment. There was also a strong and respected Rural Science course at the College, a strand which was particularly suited to Newton Park, its facilities and surroundings. Students were fully integrated into the running of the College farm, which included animal husbandry; many former students recall the farming of rabbits, following the process from breeding and care, to the animals' slaughter and the curing of the skins to use in craft projects. At that time, full use was also made of the remaining rabbit carcasses in the

Supply Association Ltd, 1955). Kathleen Crofton, *Fibres*, (London, The Educational Supply Association Ltd, 1955). Mary Dawson Collection.

²⁸ Dawson, *College Aims & Philosophy*, 1954.

²⁹ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.12.

³⁰ Dawson, *College Aims & Philosophy*, 1954.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mary Dawson, *Speech, Rotary Luncheon*, Bath, 16th May 1950.

College kitchen. The range of learning opportunities was wide. In 1958 Dawson stated that:

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the site presents almost unrivalled opportunities for a teachers' training college. It is a natural laboratory and many subjects of the curriculum are continuously enriched by the field work which is possible here.³³

Mary Dawson's community at Newton Park provided a springboard from which those initial cohorts of women could engage in public life. She asserted that:

Students today are emerging into a world in which it is more than ever important that individuals shall be able to look at problems from an international point of view. They need to be world citizens.³⁴

In the long 1950s, this citizenship could be expressed in a number of ways; women were needed in the labour market to increase production after the war; many were released from war service only to be called back within a year or two. There was an acute need for women's participation in the workforce as a whole, but particularly in employment as teachers and nurses in order to satisfy the needs of the vastly expanded educational and medical services. From the perspective of democratic citizenship, duty lay in a number of directions at once. Clare Langhamer asserts that 'fear of letting the nation down framed the responses of many' to these calls for participation.³⁵ The stability required in both economic and social terms called upon all women, married as well as single, to play their part as 'good' and active citizens. This was a major alteration in the way that many married women had previously engaged in the labour force. Women had always worked, but for many, combining work and domestic responsibility had been considered incompatible. In the long 1950s, it was deemed not only compatible, but desirable, and was firmly encouraged. Lewis notes the changing pattern of married women's work, stating that 'in 1931, only 10% of women in the labour market had been married; this had risen to 26% by 1951.'³⁶

³³ Mary Dawson, Programme For Expansion at Newton Park College, 18th October 1958. This statement was written as part of her campaign to encourage further development at Newton Park.

³⁴ Mary Dawson, *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1954.

³⁵ Langhamer, 'Feelings', p.79 p.84.

³⁶ Lewis, *Women in Britain*, p.68.

Dawson emphasised the individual's freedom to pursue roles in both the public and the private realm. This in itself was a revolution, and in comparison to the experience of previous generations, 'nothing short of radical.'³⁷ The women of Dawson's generation had not been permitted such a choice in their own youth. The great changes in the education system after the Second World War, and specifically the ability for married women to continue their careers after marriage, paved the way for women teachers to enjoy a far greater range of opportunities and choices. Beaumont asserts that they were able to embrace 'the dynamic possibilities of women's new role in post-war society.'³⁸ Free secondary education, increased training provision, and the removal of the marriage bar opened many doors. At the same time, there was a lowering of the age of marriage, as well as an increase in the birth rate. Dawson saw that this presented both challenge and opportunity for women, since it established a different pattern than that which had prevailed in her own career. She had therefore to reframe her ideas in relation to work and marriage in order to encompass this new pattern for the teaching world. The generation of teachers who were educated under Dawson used their training, and exercised agency in their lives in ways not previously possible. Their oral history testimonies demonstrate that they expected to be able to have the choice of marriage, children and a career, and to be able to balance those roles according to their own choices and circumstances.

The 'lodestar' of citizenship therefore provided 'a framework for women's participation in public life' and in terms of reconstruction, this participation could be expressed in a number of ways.³⁹ It included the worlds of work, the home and motherhood, and the importance of each of these roles in a period of reconstruction should not be overlooked. The language of feminism used by previous generations in the fight for rights and opportunities had been subsumed into the language and ideas of citizenship. As a young woman, Mary Dawson had experienced this change of focus towards citizenship after 1928. She was able to demonstrate what this change meant in terms of freedom and opportunity, and this helps to clarify the aims and ethos of her work at Newton Park College. She recognised the 'emancipatory possibilities of the status itself' which she and women like her had exploited in their own lives and careers.⁴⁰ Her speeches

³⁷ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.177.

³⁸ Beaumont, 'What Do Women Want?' p.148'

³⁹ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.40; Lister, *Citizenship*, p.14.

⁴⁰ Innes, 'Women's Citizenship', p.623.

frequently refer to this theme. A full life and dedication to public service, and the expression of citizenship which Dawson espoused have much in common with ideas expressed in the post-war period by T.H. Marshall, who wrote that 'it is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.'⁴¹ At the end of her career, Dawson noted that her deepest satisfaction came from knowing she had been able to 'give back' to society through her work in education, and repay the investment which had been made in her. Through the practical demonstration of a full life, public service through teaching, and a positive response to opportunities offered, women, she felt, had earned respect. Dawson stated that 'It is, paradoxically, more by winning respect than by talking that we are going to improve our status. I approach the question as an educationist (*sic*) and not as a feminist.'⁴² In this statement, Dawson is making her case for responsible citizenship, through which women could prove their worth – for equality earned by one's actions, and by one's engagement with the roles and duties of the citizen. She believed that this was achieved through education, and that education was the tool for creating equality, more powerful and influential than feminism.⁴³ Through the language and the practical demonstration of citizenship and the liberating potential of education, the students at Newton Park were putting feminist thought into action. Innes also asserts that women like Mary Dawson 'could afford to take for granted the achievements of earlier generations of feminists', since, having taken on public roles, they 'fought from a position within the establishment, not as outsiders bent on changing the rules.'⁴⁴ Dawson's comment also needs to be contextualised within meanings understood in the long 1950s. At this point, 'feminism' was seen as an old-fashioned concept which had preoccupied previous generations, but which no longer applied in their own world. The term was associated with their mother's or grandmother's generation, and seemed to have little relevance to their own.⁴⁵ Given this assumption, young women could now pursue the fruits of all the effort that had gone before. They echoed writer Marghanita Laski, who was one of the women for whom emancipation was

⁴¹ Marshall, Bottomore, *Citizenship*, pp.28-29.

⁴² Mary Dawson, *Speech 'Education for Equal Status'* to National Council of Women, September 23rd 1952.

⁴³ Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.102.

⁴⁴ Pugh, *Women*, p.285.

⁴⁵ Winifred Holtby, *Women passim*; Pugh, *Women*, p.74; Sayers, *Are Women Human?* p.21.

demonstrated by 'a personal pursuit of employment rather than collective political work.'⁴⁶ In Laski's words:

We were born too late for the battle. Older and nobler women struggled that I should be free, and did their work so well that I've never even bothered about being bound. Rights for women, so far as my generation is concerned, is a dead issue.⁴⁷

The years after 1945 saw other ideas align in the pursuit of citizenship and in many ways, it was the idea which characterised the period. Matthew Grant describes citizenship as 'one of the most important themes of post-war British society...[it] had real meaning and impact.'⁴⁸ Not just in Britain but internationally, governments in many other countries were focussed on rebuilding and fresh beginnings.⁴⁹ Returning service personnel were keen to see changes so that there was greater capacity in society to withstand the kind of fascist rhetoric which had taken them to war in the first place. Social unity and democratic thinking emphasised the citizen's roles and responsibilities, to the family, the community and the nation.⁵⁰ The theme of citizenship was also played out in other areas of national life in the post-war era. The thrust of a new education system included 'the endeavour to make of the pupil a good citizen, ideally a citizen of the world, but in any case, a citizen of his own country.'⁵¹ In addition, this message also affected post-war town and country planning, and whilst answering the needs for major repair to bomb-damaged towns and cities, also sought to improve the general public's accessibility to the natural environment. Matless describes those 'post-war visions of reconstructed town and country [which] were also visions of citizenship...of healthy, fulfilling and improving recreation...as a prerequisite for community life.'⁵² Many of these ideas were expressed in the newly established National Parks, the first of which was recognised under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1949. At Newton Park, the same ideas were expressed and fostered through the use of the environment, and was therefore another means of claiming ownership, through a knowledge and appreciation 'of landscape's

⁴⁶ Pugh, *Women*, p.235.

⁴⁷ Marghanita Laski in Vera Brittain, *Lady into Woman*, 1958, p.8, cited in Pugh, *Women*, p.285.

⁴⁸ Grant, 'Historicizing Citizenship' p.1188.

⁴⁹ Allen, *Women in Twentieth Century Europe*, pp.79-89.

⁵⁰ Grant, 'Historicizing Citizenship' p.1189.

⁵¹ Matless, 'Taking Pleasure in England', p.194.

⁵² *Ibid*, p.181.

beauty...and history.'⁵³ The same ideas are echoed in the government's Budget speech of 1946:

There is still wonderful beauty to be found in our country. Much of it is spoiled and ruined beyond repair; but we still have a great wealth and variety of natural scenery in this land. The best that remains should surely become the heritage, not of a few private owners, but of all our people, and above all, of the Young and the Fit, who shall find increased opportunities of health and happiness, companionship and recreation, in beautiful places.⁵⁴

Another area where citizenship could be explored was through the home. As referred to above, post-war attitudes emphasised the need to rebuild society from within the family; Claire Langhamer describes the prevailing push towards domesticity within which 1950s women operated. She asserts that it had been the 'fantasies of home' during wartime that sustained those uprooted by the wholesale movement of people. She describes visions in the popular imagination of 'privacy, self-containment and labour saving devices' and the view of 'a happy home and family life as the bulwark of the nation.'⁵⁵ A shift towards the domestic is therefore not surprising as post-war public feeling was inevitably focused on a return to home and family; the background of the Beveridge Report and the ensuing legislation of the Welfare State upheld this very idea.⁵⁶ So romanticized was the domestic dream of home, that the era has often been portrayed as a time of widespread stability in terms of marriage and the domestic ideal. Although the heavily gendered tone of the Beveridge report has since been criticised as too focused on the family wage, reliant on a single male breadwinner, it is important to recall that Child Allowance were payments made directly to the mother, a welfare measure which was widely regarded as a victory for women's rights. The inclusion of this benefit, paid to mothers in their own right, was heralded by feminist writers like Vera Brittain as 'a product of the women's revolution because it embodied the change in social values which that revolution accomplished.'⁵⁷ These were victories for 'welfare feminism.'

Family stability was the goal of many, but as Pat Thane has shown, the halcyon days of family life so vaunted in the years since was in fact a temporary phase

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.187.

⁵⁵ Langhamer 'Meanings of home', p.354.

⁵⁶ J Swindells, 'Coming Home to Heaven' *Women's History Review*, 4.2, (1995) 223-234, *passim*.

⁵⁷ Vera Brittain, cited in Pugh, *Women*, p.285

brought about by the high level of marriages during and immediately after the war, combined with a lowering of the typical age at point of marriage which the prosperity of the 1950s brought about.⁵⁸ The high numbers embarking on marriage at the time fed the media images of home and domesticity, with which we are now so familiar. New homes and a new degree of prosperity fed a consumer culture in which a woman's wage was an important additional income. Women's lived experience of the era is therefore complex and multi-faceted, featuring the competing ideologies of domesticity and work outside the home. It is also worth noting that later feminist critiques centred on the limitations and constraints of the solely domestic role. This fails to acknowledge the very real independence offered by 'your own front door', to a generation for whom their first taste of freedom was as homemakers, away from the restrictions presented by parents, commanding officers or schoolteachers, as well as something that many people had to wait many years to achieve as a result of the post-war housing crisis.⁵⁹ Judy Giles asserts that during the long 1950s, 'A home of your own' was at one and the same time a private material space, a signifier of social status, and a symbolic articulation of a sustaining dream.'⁶⁰

The expression of citizenship therefore presented the competing ideologies of both work and home, with encouragement to do both. The practical reality of this choice was presented to young women and girls at the time through the popular format of 'career novels', through which schoolgirls and young women were able to learn about the world of work and the possibilities available to them.⁶¹ These often present the dual role of career *and* motherhood and scorn domesticity alone as an old-fashioned choice. Throughout the long 1950s, this idea grew, and as Todd asserts:

the enduring image of the 1950s as a decade of lipsticked and aproned housewives was only true in the advertisements...By the early 1960s, the children of the 1940s were growing up to believe that 'good' mothers went out to work.⁶²

⁵⁸ Thane, 'Family Fortunes', p.34.

⁵⁹ Spencer, *Gender and Work*, p.159.

⁶⁰ Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, (Oxford: Berg, 2004) p.240.

⁶¹ Stephanie Spencer, 'Women's Dilemmas in post-war Britain: career stories for adolescent girls' *History of Education*, 29.4 (2000) 329 – 342, *passim*.

⁶² Todd, *The People*, p.211.

In the long 1950s the change in education provision, with secondary schooling for all and a higher school leaving age, meant that 'girls making their school leaving choices were no longer expected to regard the entry into work as a stop gap before marriage, but as something to which they would return at a later date.'⁶³ Girls were advised 'in favour of choosing a job with a future rather than a job with simply a present.'⁶⁴ This change in the way that jobs and family life were viewed 'validated the prospect of girls investing their time in training', so that young women entering training had an understanding that their professional skills would be in demand over many years.⁶⁵ This significant change was also the theme of Princess Elizabeth's speech at the opening of Newton Park College in 1950:

You are fortunate...to be making teaching your career, because you will avoid that hard conflict between the calls of a profession on the one hand and marriage and a home upon the other which besets so many professional women...There never was a greater need for women teachers than there is now and any girl who feels the call to make teaching her profession, and answers it, can do so in the knowledge that she is satisfying the needs of the nation as well as her own.⁶⁶

This dual role was explored in the influential work 'Women's Two Roles' by Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein. Published in 1956, it identified, analysed and recommended 'the model of combining marriage, motherhood and paid employment over the life cycle' that was already characterising the women's labour market by the time the book was published.⁶⁷ The pattern was already being embraced, particularly in the teaching profession, as a solution to maintaining and increasing the workforce.⁶⁸ Myrdal and Klein's assertion that women should be able to 'develop their personalities to the full and to take an active part in adult social and economic life' closely echoes Mary Dawson's own philosophy at Newton Park.⁶⁹ Helen McCarthy has recently highlighted the expectation of the dual role for young women of the late 1960s; she cites a woman's magazine of 1969 which states 'Not so long ago women were expected to choose either a job or marriage...today the ambitious girl doesn't see why she

⁶³ Giles, *Parlour and Suburb*, p.12.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.90.

⁶⁵ Spencer, *Gender and Work*, p.12.

⁶⁶ H.R.H Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Edinburgh, Speech, *Opening of Newton Park College*, 2nd March 1950.

⁶⁷ Alva Myrdal, Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work*, 2nd Ed, (London: Routledge, 1968) *passim*

⁶⁸ Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.14.

⁶⁹ Myrdal and Klein, *Two Roles*, p.xv.

can't have marriage and a career...'⁷⁰ The pattern which, in reality, was established a generation earlier as this thesis demonstrates – the 'ambitious girls' of the teaching profession had helped to embed the idea, which quickly became established throughout society at all levels.

Beaumont's research highlights these trends, citing the pressures which married women's organisations recognised for their members. The pressure to work competed with that to start a family.⁷¹ Within a few years, the glamour of advertising in a consumer boom, presented 'the image of the 'modern wife' devoted to her home and family, working happily in her labour-saving kitchen.'⁷² It is these images which have for so long dominated discourse about the long 1950s. Beaumont notes the irony that consumer goods could often only be enjoyed where married women continued to work outside the home. She goes on to state that, 'at the same time, what may be seen as the ultra-traditional women's organisations such as the Mother's Union were warning their members 'not to make an idol out of domesticity.'⁷³ Women were required, it seemed, both to leave and to stay in the labour market.⁷⁴

Each one of the diverse demands on women in the long 1950s came with its own theories and opinions. On one hand urged to work, on another urged to stay at home. Jane Lewis refers to 'the flood of literature on the family [which] shifted the focus of attention much more to the mother in the wake of the newly discovered psychological importance of the mother-child relationship.'⁷⁵ Public and media attention focussed squarely on the issue of 'adequate mothering' as the surest means to securing future social stability.⁷⁶ As well as being one of the authors of the influential '*Women's Two Roles*', the sociologist Viola Klein produced a series of studies examining the prevailing and changing attitudes towards working women. She asserted that 'except for mothers of young children, domestic work is no longer considered a full-time occupation and many women regard it as either laziness or waste of time not to seek another outlet for their energies.'⁷⁷ In terms of

⁷⁰ Helen McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017) 46-61, p.46.

⁷¹ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.179.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.189.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p.191.

⁷⁴ Lewis, *Women since 1945*, p.70.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.11.

⁷⁷ Klein, *Married Women in Employment*, p. 257. Klein, *Professional Womanpower*, *passim*.

post-war discourse, the roles of homemaker, mother and worker all demonstrated responsible citizenship and each fulfilled an important role in a restructuring society. Dawson was pragmatic about this, stating:

We must accept in the first place that there is a difference between boys and girls in relation to careers. A girl's career tends to be interrupted by marriage in a way that a boy's does not. In fact most girls have two careers, her professional one and homemaking.⁷⁸

One of the reasons for sociologists like Viola Klein to analyse the subject was in order to discover more about working mothers, since negative perceptions and psychological explanations were then identifying them 'as one of the causes of mental disorder in children'.⁷⁹ Another public concern looked at juvenile delinquency and hooliganism, seeking scapegoats to take the blame – a prevalent view was that 'juvenile delinquency was directly linked to the increase in the number of working mothers'.⁸⁰ Against the backdrop of such negative debates, Mary Dawson comes across as a voice of reason, reassurance and realism. She said:

There are many people, usually of the older generation, who continually deplore modern education. They are usually people who know little about it and derive the material for their criticisms from a few isolated acts of hooliganism. I seem to remember that there were hooligans when I was a child...⁸¹

Mary Dawson's abiding aim was to raise the standard and profile of her profession. As previously mentioned, at a time when ideas of 'good' citizenship were considered 'a matter of character', candidates for the teaching profession needed to be those who could demonstrate 'habits of moral reflection and a high sense of duty'.⁸² She stated that:

The community is affected by the fact that we are all bound together by the profession of teaching, a tie which ought to mean that we are people with certain special characteristics. If we have selected you properly, it should mean that you are all interested in people, and especially children, and are concerned to see them grow up into fine men and women. It should mean

⁷⁸ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Bishop Fox's School Prize Distribution*, Taunton, 3rd February 1955.

⁷⁹ Pugh, *Women*, p.296.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Mary Dawson, *Speech, West Twerton Girls' School Prize Giving*, 21st October 1948.

⁸² Heater, *Education for Citizenship*, p.95.

that you are responsible people, capable of serving a profession which, by its nature, demands dedication and commitment to the needs of youth.⁸³

She said that 'a College of Education is one of the most important institutions in the country, because we are turning out leaders of tomorrow,'⁸⁴ such was the potential for teachers themselves and for those they taught. Raising the standard of the profession involved the careful selection of candidates for training, through promotion of the role of the teacher, and through educational theories of progressive, child-centred learning. She said:

Teaching itself is essentially a creative process...a fact that the more enlightened, informal, democratic approach of today emphasises...Society needs teachers who can free and guide the creative powers of children, not only in making things, but in living together, in social activities and in thinking...the function of the teacher is to stimulate and not inhibit such powers.⁸⁵

The advent of the 1944 Education Act brought in more specialism, with the identification of distinct stages of a child's development in terms of teaching provision. In the past, a teacher's professional status rose according to the age group they taught and the education they themselves had received. University graduates taught in grammar schools, a field dominated by men. Certificated teachers from the training colleges taught in the elementary schools, and were chiefly women, with the lowest remuneration rates, and the lowest status. Raising of the status of teacher across the board was therefore a priority. The McNair Report had criticised the existing system as 'chaotic and ill-adjusted even to present needs' and sought to unify the field overall.

Mary Dawson stressed that:

By the very nature of her profession, [the teacher] is, in a very small way, a leader of society. She is, by the standards and values she sets in her classroom and communicates to her children, affecting the quality of living of the future when her children are grown up and can exercise power. She needs to be a growing person. She needs to be, at the same time, forward looking with her finger on the pulse of a new emerging society, quick to see

⁸³ Mary Dawson, *Dedication to Mollie Humphries*, 21st September 1961.

⁸⁴ Mary Dawson, *Speech*, *Argyle Young Families Association*, 14th February 1950.

⁸⁵ Mary Dawson, *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1954.

its growing points...and also the conservator of fundamental values and principles.⁸⁶

Candidates for entry into Newton Park College were therefore chosen carefully, and had to demonstrate qualities of responsibility, flexibility and enthusiasm, and be those who were outward looking and showed promise in fully understanding their future role. It was for this reason that she chose her prospective students from those who demonstrated character and personality, rather than simply those who had achieved a specific standard in examination. Dawson asserted that she sought 'people of truth and integrity...it's quality of personality that one is looking for in students – and tutors – all of the time'.⁸⁷ The College application documents stated that:

No-one should be recommended if there is any ground for believing that she will not make a desirable teacher. Those who have the initiative, and power to think and work for themselves apart from the stimulus of an examination are needed and also those who have some idea of the meaning and value of a teacher's career.⁸⁸

Mary Dawson personally interviewed all the students. Former students testify to her degree of involvement in this process and the type of relationships built between principal and students:

I always found her very approachable, always ready to help in a very practical way. She too had a keen personal interest in everyone and sometimes we felt she understood us better than we understood ourselves.⁸⁹

Another describes what Dawson looked for in prospective students:

Miss Dawson was very much more on what the person was like, she really was...and she chose well. She told me much later 'Yes I remember your interview, you talked horses all the time'.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

⁸⁸ Newton Park College, *Application Form*.

⁸⁹ Margaret, female student, 1949-51. Written testimony.

⁹⁰ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

The interview sought to assess the quality of an individual's character and suitability for teacher training. Although Dawson stated that the majority of applicants were from the grammar schools who could provide the requisite two years of sixth form studies, there is considerable evidence from the records that students had much broader origins. Some, especially in the first decade of the College, came straight from wartime service, some had failed examinations, some struggled with difficult family situations, others were unable to find funding for higher education, some failed to complete courses already begun due to personal issues. Despite the shortage of teachers, there was a determination that the right candidates should be found, and the net cast widely enough to ensure:

that the teaching profession represents, so far as is practicable, a cross section of the interests and experiences of society at large. Travel, experience of affairs, participation in some form of social service—all these enhance the contribution which a man or woman can make to the schools.⁹¹

The students who formed the Newton Park College community were from a range of backgrounds, circumstances and education levels. The unifying factor is the combined judgement by their schools or employers, and the results of their interview, that the candidates for training had an appropriate set of skills which could be developed towards the task of teaching. This was an appraisal style similar to other progressive colleges of the period; colleges often lead by women like Mary Dawson. Edwards cites Miss Frances Consitt, the Principal of Avery Hill College, who stated that 'We look for soundness, vigour, vitality, sensitiveness. We attach quite as much importance to fitness in character and temperament as to academic attainment.'⁹² The ATCDE prepared a report on the methods of choosing candidates amongst its members, to which Dawson contributed. It noted the importance of academic achievement, alongside ability in practical subjects such as music, art, PE, plus the holding of school office and various forms of community service. It was noted that 'very great weight was placed on the heads' reports'.⁹³ The College interview came after all this. The report concluded:

It will be seen, therefore, that the Principal makes the final selection in the light of all the evidence that can be obtained, and the choice is guided by the objective test of examinations and actual achievements in school, and by the opinion of people who have known the candidate throughout her

⁹¹ Butler, *Educational Reconstruction*, paragraph 103.

⁹² Edwards, *Women*, p.75.

⁹³ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.79.

secondary school course, and who know from experience the qualities which go to make a successful teacher.⁹⁴

This emphasis on character is in line with Dawson's belief that academic attainment and the passing of exams did not prove one's worth, but that this should be judged on a person's willingness to contribute to life around them. Her comments about individual candidates refer to character traits she perceived, rather than any academic record. She was again identifying her own experience, as a bright girl from an very modest background, who had been identified as showing promise herself. She had been reliant on the judgement of her own teachers and knew personally the opportunities such attention to the individual could bring. Dawson took measures to assess individual cases and judge how best to help a particular student; she believed that individuals were worth the effort if this could reap dividends in the form of a good career as a teacher.⁹⁵

Dawson's judgments about her students are honest and pragmatic in tone and content, with comments such as 'this girl shows grit and character.'⁹⁶ For a prospective student, being an active member of a school community or having practical skill with young people was rated above academic ability. There is much discussion of 'potential' and 'development' and good 'all-rounders' with 'sound common sense and initiative' are favoured. Dawson accepted personal recommendations from people beyond the educational field; an example is one young man, who, lacking in any formal qualifications, was encouraged through a youth group leader to apply. His sponsor wrote that his lack of any formal qualification 'is more than outweighed by his present promise as a practical teacher.'⁹⁷ Dawson had experienced the transforming nature of education herself and she enabled others to do the same. One student, who had been supported through her course against financial odds, wrote to Mary Dawson to express her thanks, and said 'My mother has always dreamed of a house with a view and now that I am working it has become possible for her to have one.'⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ This is evident from the Student Records. There are many examples of Dawson intervening in individual cases, undertaking further correspondence with schools and interested parties to discover more about a student's situation.

⁹⁶ Student Records.

⁹⁷ Student Records.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Dawson also wrote references and testimonials for her students, following their careers with interest. She showed a deep concern for the students and their future potential as agents of change. For many students, the efforts she went to were considerable, with correspondence lasting far beyond their college experience, and following them through work placements, marriage, family and beyond. A student with responsibility for siblings and a single parent was supported emotionally and materially because Dawson felt strongly that 'the thing that would help her and her family the most would be to qualify as a teacher. I am quite sure she is worth helping.'⁹⁹ During the ensuing two years of study, Dawson also wrote follow-up reports, culminating in a final report on the student's record, along with a letter of recommendation for their first teaching post. Her ability to identify a person's character traits is shown through these assessments.¹⁰⁰ One student recalls:

My final report, which I've never forgotten said, Miss X was practical rather than academic – that I would make a contribution in education but it would be practical – you know I was a bit disappointed at that really but it was absolutely true.¹⁰¹

Once at Newton Park students were encouraged to think holistically, to see education in a broader context and to realise the value of learning for life, and not just limited to the passing of assessments and examinations. Teachers who had wide knowledge, wide interests and wide experience were better able to respond to the needs of the children they taught.

Dawson believed in the growth of the individual. In advocating personal development as well as the basic teaching qualification, she was again promoting the ongoing development of teacher training as a whole. She wrote:

It is a truism to state that the main aim of the Teachers' College is to develop the student as a person. What he is will determine the quality of his teaching, and the nature of his influence on young people. In addition to a considerable body of knowledge and skills relevant to his profession, he needs open-mindedness and creative attitudes both to knowledge and to society. He needs to be adaptive, flexible and imaginative, and above all, to care about the children in his charge. A college should be student-centred much as a school is child-centred. These simple statements are no airy-fairy, idealistic generalisations. Translated into the life of a college, they

⁹⁹ Student Records.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

determine the curriculum, syllabuses, timetable and methods of learning and teaching. They affect the approach to teaching practice and to personal tutorial responsibilities, as well as the nature of the college community.¹⁰²

This emphasis on personal action and agency, shaped the College curriculum. Dawson said that 'throughout our training, our main concern is the quality of the personalities of the students who are to become teachers.'¹⁰³ She affirmed that 'the real reward lies in the future and it is towards this that training is planned.'¹⁰⁴ Further, she stated:

The academic curriculum and professional training take account of the student as a person, as a teacher and as a member of the wider community of the country and the world. All, of course, overlap. A good teacher, in the truest sense of the word, must be a good person, which again involves active interest and membership of the fellowship of human beings outside the school.¹⁰⁵

The curriculum at Newton Park College acknowledged the importance of the growth of the individual, as well as a deep understanding of the children they would have in their care:

The first step in the teacher's training must, therefore, be a clear realisation that knowledge is not an end in itself but only a means to a greater end of good living. Furthermore, children must be seen as widely different and developing human beings needing help in the expression of their own personalities and the adjustment of themselves to the needs of living with others. Though the teaching of sound skills is important, yet an understanding of children as persons is still more important.¹⁰⁶

Students recognised the value of this training. One student went on to further study in a London college, and compared her experiences there and at Newton Park. She wrote that '[here] there is none of the stress on you yourself and the development of you as a person...there is no interest in the person outside the

¹⁰² Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p. 10. Dawson uses the male pronoun, commonly used at the time to include both male and female.

¹⁰³ Mary Dawson, *The Curriculum and Professional Training of the Student*, Mary Dawson Collection, Bath Spa University Archive, uncatalogued.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

lecturer's field.' Recognising the benefit she had gained from the holistic approach at Newton Park, she also said:

What I'd managed to start in myself at Newton Park, sparked by your staff, has continued. Without Newton Park, its gracious serenity, the accent on developing people, I could never have had room to grow and expand and am sure could never have learnt to cope with life as she is lived.¹⁰⁷

The style of education offered at the College saw 'students development as people...at the heart of preparation for teaching.' The importance of this was stressed by Dawson repeatedly. In 1960 she wrote:

This is where education comes in. For a good liberal education does not only provide you with knowledge and with skills, but it also awakens and stimulates your interests and widens your sympathies. In truth, our very survival depends on an education which, by fostering knowledge, will promote mutual respect, understanding and sympathy.¹⁰⁸

Mary Dawson urged the students to continue their education and interests. She advised them to 'keep yourself abreast of what is going on. When you feel you know it all you have begun to die.'¹⁰⁹ On another occasion she affirmed 'the need to bear in mind that one can only educate as long as one is being educated.'¹¹⁰ By doing so, by updating and remaining aware of new thinking, they would avoid the pitfalls of some of the teaching she had witnessed in her own early career:

It is appalling to think that you may be teaching in the year 2003 exactly the same way as you are teaching in 1963, and that there are teachers in the schools who are teaching in 1963 in the same way that they taught in 1923 after the First World War. Society changes, children change, knowledge is growing, methods are changing and it is important that teachers should keep themselves ahead of knowledge and keep fresh. The most opinionated and assertive members of the teaching profession are those who know the least. They are applying today the methods they learnt forty years ago, and have completely failed to realise the vast social changes and social needs of the last decade.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Letter, Former student to Mary Dawson, (no date) Scrapbook 1, *Archive 1945-1959*.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Dawson, Speech, West Twerton Girls' School Prize Giving, 3rd November 1960.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Dawson, *Lecture to students, The First Year Out*, 17th June 1964.

¹¹⁰ Mary Dawson, *Lecture to students, The First Year Out*, 2nd May 1963.

¹¹¹ Mary Dawson, Speech, Argyle Young Families Association, 14th February 1950.

The personal development of the individual was at the heart of Dawson's philosophy for the College, and she considered that 'lively vital teachers with wide interests and a zest for living help to produce lively vital children.'¹¹² Those without wide interests, she bluntly affirmed, remained 'as dead as dodos.'¹¹³ Education itself had long been recognised as the door to opportunity, and it was a critical aspect of equality for women: Byrne asserts that:

the most important single educational life chance a child has, as she clambers up her educational ladder, is probably the quality and vision – or the limitations – of her teachers...no single influence for conservation or change, for creating insurmountable hurdles or new opportunities, will ever be as seminal as that of the teachers in our schools.¹¹⁴

Dawson continued to be an enthusiastic proponent of progressive education. She wrote:

There has been, in the last half century, a complete change in the conception of what constitutes a teacher's job. The most important things in education are things of the spirit and imponderable. The modern teacher is trained to think of the child before the subject.¹¹⁵

The holistic education she had herself observed in colleges in the 1920s and 1930s placed the child at the centre of the teaching process, in contrast to former styles of teaching which focussed rigidly on teaching subject by subject according to the demands of each. She stated that 'the period between the wars was one of intense vitality and activity amongst a small minority of educational thinkers and pioneers in revolt against a die-hard majority.'¹¹⁶ In the following piece, written in 1967, Dawson argued that:

Fundamentally, work in psychology, Freud, Adler and Jung was changing the whole approach to individual thoughts. Whitehead's *Philosophy of Education*, published in 1929, with its attack on inert ideas and its emphasis on the utilisation of knowledge; Dewey's teachings on activity and child participation in school projects; the work of some distinguished school inspectors and of educationalists such as Sir Percy Nunn; pioneer and experimental schools such as Summerhill, Dartington Hall and so forth, the

¹¹² Mary Dawson, *Speech, Argyle Young Families Association*, 14th February 1950.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p.211.

¹¹⁵ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Kensington House School, Parent Teacher Association*, 8th May 1950.

¹¹⁶ Mary Dawson, *Twenty-one years in a College of Education*, 2 page document, 1967. The same ideas were elaborated upon in Dawson's book *Twenty-two years*.

work of all these and many more had created a ferment of educational thoughts. Progressive training colleges were deeply involved.¹¹⁷

Aldrich asserts that much progressive education was seen as ‘cranky’ before the Second World War, but that ‘after 1945, many features of ‘New Education’ were incorporated into English education, especially in primary schools, which received international recognition for their child-centred ethos.’¹¹⁸ The post-war restructuring of education therefore included broader commitments to new practices in education, to ‘enlarge and improve the scientific foundations upon which the education of young children should be based.’¹¹⁹ In moving away from the rote learning methods of a previous age, this focus on progressive educational methods also aligned with the post-war messages of democratic citizenship. The focus on the individual highlighted the importance of each person’s role and value, and fitted the desire ‘to see a more cohesive and democratic education become part of a more cohesive and democratic society.’¹²⁰ Progressive educators like Dawson had long recognised the quality of the teacher as central to a good education system, and considered that educational legislation had finally caught up with such ideas. Advancing the quality of the teacher and teacher education was an idea which Newton Park College fully embraced. Mary Dawson’s views can be gleaned through the many statements she made about this subject, as well as those criticisms in relation to the poor practice she had observed throughout her early career. A good teacher, she understood, should have active interest in her work, but also in the world beyond her setting, in order to counter the accusations of isolation and insularity levelled by McNair. They should demonstrate a sound understanding of children as individuals and as people, and cease to treat children as a mass to be drilled in the facts of a subject. The teacher should keep up with current practice and thinking in the educational world, and be receptive to change and adaptation. Furthermore, the teacher should exercise their intellect, and be self-critical and reflective. She further stated:

I was extremely fortunate in knowing some of these colleges intimately and I recall vividly the revelation that came to me in my first training college post as a history tutor. A small Froebelian college of only 70 students with a practicing school attached, it was already in 1931 teaching principals of

¹¹⁷ Dawson, *Twenty-one Years*, p.1.

¹¹⁸ Aldrich, *Century of Education*, p. 495.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.501.

education which would be considered enlightened even today. And not only teaching progressive theory but carrying it into practice in the child centred pattern of education in its infants' school. The inert ideas of education which had been lying dormant in my mind during a short period of grammar school teaching, chiefly preparing children for School Certificate, suddenly came to life as I observed these little children being taught in this stimulating environment and became involved in discussions with my enthusiastic colleagues. To this college I owe a great debt in the way of educational understanding, and I am sure that there were many colleges in the '30s of which the same could be said.¹²¹

Beyond Newton Park College, Mary Dawson was involved in external research and collaboration with other higher education bodies, as a means to inform practice on a wider scale and establish and raise the reputation of the College. One of the recommendations of McNair was the establishment of regional groups of colleges and universities to oversee curriculum development and the promotion of a 'coherent training service', so that 'the idea of separate and self-contained training institutions [could] be abandoned'.¹²² The establishment of these Area Training Organisations (ATO) was aimed at creating 'a single, great profession' from the mixture of university education departments, teacher training, domestic science and art colleges. Initially, nineteen Area Training Organisations were set up, and the majority then created Institutes of Education based in the universities, consisting of university education departments in collaboration with the various colleges in their area.¹²³ Describing the work of Area Training Organisations and the Institutes, Dawson stated that 'the fluid situation made it a particularly good time in which to reorganise'; the ATO served as the overarching body which approved courses but ensured independence, so that 'every college has an entirely individual set-up,' and both of these aspects suited Dawson's plans.¹²⁴

The functions of the Institutes of Education were three-fold:

1. To foster an appreciation of the essential unity of the teaching profession.
2. To be the responsible body for the initial training of teachers in the region as well as for the further training of practising teachers.

¹²¹ Dawson, *Twenty-one years*.

¹²² University of Bristol Institute of Education, p.15.

¹²³ Robin Pedley, *Towards the Comprehensive University*. (London: Palgrave, 1977) pp. 58-68.

¹²⁴ Mary Dawson, Speech, Headteachers' Study Group, Street, Somerset, 2^{8th} February 1955.

3. To provide a centre for the organisation of research and other educational activities.¹²⁵

The need for research and reflective practice was paramount, if, as stated, ‘the role of education is to be understood in its modern setting.’¹²⁶

Dawson was an active member of the University of Bristol Institute of Education, whose member colleges were situated throughout Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire.¹²⁷ She served on the Executive Committee of the Institute, on the Professional Committee, and as Lecturer. The documentation of the Institute concurred with the aims of McNair as well as Dawson’s own ambitions when it stated:

all kinds of fissures and distinctions have in the past broken up the profession into a thing of bits and pieces...if a sense of unity is imparted in the colleges, a tremendous access of power will flow, into the education services...The unity fostered by the institute will thus be no formal unity, but one which springs from the fact that each college recognises it has a special and individual contribution to make to the whole.¹²⁸

It has already been noted that Dawson’s early experience had convinced her of the danger of ‘inert ideas’ and the examination process. Many educators of her generation expressed the same ideas, and the new structures which followed after 1944 provided space for exploration and research of alternatives. Ironically, this was also the period of the 11+ examination. The White Paper *Educational Reconstruction* had stated that the classification of children at 11 should avoid ‘a competitive test’, instead resting ‘on an assessment of their individual aptitudes largely by such means as school records, supplemented, if necessary, by intelligence tests.’¹²⁹ It went on to state:

¹²⁵ University of Bristol Institute of Education, p.15.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.17.

¹²⁷ The other colleges were the Diocesan Training College, Fishponds, Bristol; West of England College of Art, Bristol; City of Bath Training College of Domestic Science; Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, Wiltshire; St Paul’s Training College, Cheltenham; St Mary’s Training College, Cheltenham; Gloucestershire Training College of Domestic Science and the Diocesan Training College, Salisbury. In addition, there were four Emergency Training Colleges which were part of the Institute for as long as they existed. These were Redland Training College, Bristol; Oakley Training College for Men, Cheltenham; Oakley Training College for Women, Cheltenham, and Burderop Park Training College, Swindon, Wiltshire.

¹²⁸ University of Bristol Institute of Education, (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1947) (BSU/1/30).

¹²⁹ Butler, *Educational Reconstruction*, paragraph 27.

The choice of one type of secondary education rather than another for a particular pupil will not be finally determined at the age of 11, but will be subject to review as the child's special gifts and capacities develop. At the age of 13, or even later, there will be facilities for transfer to a different type of education, if the original choice proves to have been unsuitable....The keynote of the new system will be that the child is the centre of education.¹³⁰

This commitment towards child-centred education appealed to educators like Dawson, as did the suggested flexibility of the system proposed; Aldrich asserts that the real iniquities of the system in practice did not emerge until the 1960s.¹³¹ Interestingly Dawson, as an outspoken critic of examination in general, makes no specific references to the 11+, and nor do those whose oral histories feature in this thesis, although its impact must have been strongly felt during their careers. It can be assumed, however, that Dawson's view of the 11+ would be the same as for all other examinations, since although it was supposed to test 'something fixed and innate, most final year classes spent a lot of time practising test papers to improve scores.'¹³² Dawson deplored this kind of education in the same way as she disliked the 'narrowing of the training to mere mechanical work...and repetition from memory'¹³³ which had happened under the 'payment by results' system she had witnessed early in her career. As Kamm notes, 'students excelled in examination questions, the answers to which they had learned by heart, but fell down badly over questions which required them to use their intelligence.'¹³⁴ In describing her task at Newton Park College, Dawson said:

It is more important that a Biology student learns to look and observe than that she can mug-up facts for a certain day and unload them in an examination; it is easily possible for a slick but thoroughly unreliable person to 'get by'.¹³⁵

As an alternative to examination, Dawson was an enthusiastic and committed proponent of Continuous Assessment, which she viewed as a more suitable and favourable way of assessing student learning. She said:

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Aldrich, *History of Education*, p.121.

¹³² D Gillard, Effects on Primary Schools, in *The wind of change: 1951-1964*, available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter11.html> [Accessed 24.6.18].

¹³³ Dawson, *Twenty-one years*, p.2.

¹³⁴ Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, p.274.

¹³⁵ Dawson, *Aims & Philosophy*, 1950.

The first aim of a teacher training college is personal development because the power to teach is essentially an expression of the whole person...Fundamental in personality are attitudes which motivate present conduct and future growth. It is possible to teach with an outward appearance of success but with entire disregard of the lasting attitudes which have been established...An external examination system can tempt one to do this and so can any system which aims primarily at showmanship...the College staff have consistently aimed at cultivating healthy attitudes, including those vital interests which lead to further growth when College days are over...the fulfilment of this aim has been made possible by the liberal policy of the University of Bristol Institute of Education in encouraging examination by assessment, a method which enables one to take into consideration qualities of personality and basic attitudes as they are constantly expressed in work and behaviour.¹³⁶

She also disseminated the same message in her speeches to schools and parents' groups, stating that:

enlightened parents are the ones who do not merely focus on education as the passing of exams. Some girls come to us with wonderful capacity to memorise for examinations but little power of thought...they have limited interests, little self-confidence, little social poise, frequently they have a real distaste for study. Before we can do much with these girls, we must re-educate them and open the windows of their minds.¹³⁷

Other research emerged as a result of the approach to the curriculum at Newton Park itself. Despite Dawson's comments that busy and 'overstretched staffs' often felt research opportunities to be 'a pious hope', she continued to engage in curriculum research, including analysis of the College's *Introduction to Teaching* programme.¹³⁸ More commonly known as the Village Survey, the programme existed partly due to the difficulties and peripatetic nature of the early period of the College's existence. Dawson explained:

Knowledge and skills are important, but the amount of knowledge and skill you can give in two years is really very little. The important thing is to set up in the students right attitudes, so that they will realise what a lot they still have to learn when they leave college, and will have lively, growing interests in a number of things. Boring lecturers who kill interest have no place in a college.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Ibid. The 'qualities of personality and basic attitudes' referred to here also echo Dawson's own emphasis on character and the qualities of the teacher. This was a judgement, not about background or attainment, but about potential for the teaching profession.

¹³⁷ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Argyle Young Families Association*, 14th February 1950.

¹³⁸ Appendix 33, Correspondence from AM Dawson, (MSS.176/CD/D/1/9).

¹³⁹ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Headteachers' Study Group, Street, Somerset*, 28th February 1955.

The Village Survey was 'designed to help [students] find out how to take the lid off children's minds,' and came about due to:

the hurried opening of the College, before buildings were ready or a full staff collected, was symptomatic of the urgent need for teachers which even at that time made improvisation a necessity.¹⁴⁰

The lack of a permanent teaching space in January 1946 led Mary Dawson to send the students on hastily arranged school placements immediately. This proved an effective introduction to the teaching profession for new students and was enhanced and refined over time, becoming the formal Introduction to Teaching course in September 1948. The course brought Dawson's theories of community, and the value she placed in community, to the fore, since it served to demonstrate those values, and their benefit to students. Students were placed individually or in pairs into village school environments, where they observed the day to day running of the school as well as the cultural and social aspects of village life. After a few weeks of observation, this 'Village Survey' was presented as a formal portfolio of work and an accompanying presentation to share with staff, placement providers and other students. The Village Survey very usefully served as a way to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the young students, confirming their choice of course to tutors and to the students themselves. Some saw it as a 'trial by fire', others as an exciting, if challenging, opportunity. Certainly it tested their mettle so early in the student experience. One student recalls that 'you were pushed right out of your comfort zone.'¹⁴¹ For others it confirmed their suitability for teacher training:

I had an enjoyable time there finding out what teaching was all about. It was called 'Village Survey'...Because at that time there were a lot of village schools. The situation is quite different now of course but Village Survey was a very good opportunity; some people decided at the end of it that teaching wasn't for them.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Melhuish, *Introduction to Teaching*.

¹⁴¹ Alison S, female student, 1963-66. Oral testimony.

¹⁴² James, male student, 1960-63. Oral testimony.

Eileen Melhuish, Dawson's Deputy Principal and colleague from the beginning of the College, described the Village Survey as:

An introductory course designed to open up new thought in the students, to give them new experience and sharpen their awareness – in short, to set them on the road towards the fullest possible personal development. Each year in the light of experience the course was re-shaped, or emphasis shifted, or new ideas incorporated.¹⁴³

As a means of developing a young teacher training student to look beyond the classroom, the Village Survey was an effective first step. Melhuish talked about 'developing potentialities', and using the experience 'to launch out on a dual course of academic and professional studies more perceptive, more certain of the goal ahead, more skilled in methods of self-education, more mature as a person; to infect children with enthusiasm shared.'¹⁴⁴ The 'potentialities' were those attitudes and attributes which Dawson had sought in each student at their initial interview, and the experience of Village Survey served to heighten and expose both the students and their tutors to this individual potential. For many, those initial weeks of the course confirmed their choice of career, for others, it highlighted the gaps in their knowledge, and for some, it very effectively demonstrated that teaching was not a suitable career option. Whilst on placement in the village environment, the students were encouraged to view the schools they were placed in as part of the wider community, and to observe the day-to-day life of the village. The opening section of the survey description stated that:

Homes not schools are the chief educators; it is parents who make children confident or anxious, live-minded or apathetic. But homes are not merely houses. 'Home' includes the civic community into which the child is born – village or town or urban aggregation. You will be drawn to consider life in this particular village. By comparing your findings with those of students in other villages, and by discussions at College, it is hoped that your knowledge will be widened and your sympathies extended. You will have learned something about children, and you will have begun to understand how the neighbourhood provides opportunities and material for their education in the fullest sense of the word.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Melhuish, *Introduction to Teaching*.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Mary Dawson, *Outline of the Village Survey*, September 1950.

The students were advised to consider every characteristic of village life including, for example, architecture, farming, economics, the history of the village, amenities, transport, demographics – in fact as many facets as they observed. Where possible, this was to be carried out with the help and cooperation of the children themselves. This experience showed students that schools did not exist in isolation, but as part of a community structure; that children were not just pupils in a class but members of wider networks including their families, neighbourhoods, businesses, farms, churches and clubs. In this way, the ideas of the Village Survey echoed the progressive educational research which had been established as far back as the Hadow Reports of the inter-war period, but was still to be fully embedded in the educational system. Child-centred holistic learning took into account every aspect of a child's life and influence, and focused on the teacher's response to the individual child, as this quote emphasises:

The child...lives in a world which stretches from his own home to the ends of the earth, which includes the street where he lives, the factory where his mother works, North Africa where his father is fighting, Japan which prevents him from having rubber shoes. His life is affected by what is happening today, but also by the factory owner who built his back-to-back house a century ago. It is affected by climate and topography and by the presence of natural resources in his neighbourhood, but also by how people work, how they use what they produce, how they govern themselves and him...And his world is changing.¹⁴⁶

The Newton Park College students carried out their own observations of village life, then gathered a portfolio of information, which was used to inform the assessment work each individual produced. It was then invaluable as a reference during the teaching course which followed. Former students testify to the learning experience of Village Survey, and the effect that it had, and almost all the oral history interviewees mention the experience:

We had to spend some of our time observing in the village school and some time looking round the village, investigating, meeting people, which was not the easiest thing to do at 18 straight from school, and finding out about the village.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ R.A.C. Oliver, *The Training of Teachers in the Universities*, London, University of London Press Ltd, 1943, p.6.

¹⁴⁷ Helen, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

I found village survey wonderful.¹⁴⁸

A delightful experience and rather a good way looking back on it of initiating us it got you into a school and we were all allotted to a village.¹⁴⁹

It was just such a different experience, you know; I was a town child but that's never left me, that experience. But also it was a sharp learning curve, because of all the totally new people...I think that when you've just been to school, your experiences of dealing with people are not that many and it was a challenge, and I think maybe some people would've found that difficult and probably couldn't deal with it very well. I really relished it...but you've got to be able to deal with all kinds of people and meet all kinds of people from all sorts of background and....do something with the experience. I think that was a very positive thing. It gave you some material to work with.¹⁵⁰

The Village Survey, therefore, propagated the very important idea that education, narrowly seen, was not a sufficient foundation on which to build a teaching career. What was required was learning, and holistic learning, as an attitude to carry through life. The introductory course in the form of the Village Survey was honed and adapted throughout Dawson's years, changing as a result of feedback from students, staff and schools, and crucially, from those qualified former students who reported back to the College as they progressed through their careers. Eileen Melhuish described it as 'a pioneer experiment' which was a distinctive part of the College training, and as such it was widely respected in the educational field.¹⁵¹ Dawson was training teachers to be leaders of their communities in the future, a role they learned by being part of such a community within the College, as well as observing village communities within their training.

Mary Dawson's personal attributes were important to the College she created. It has already been noted that her determination helped to overcome the initial frustrations of the foundation period. In later years she was described as 'the foundation and the complete author of the College...her vision and her humanity,

¹⁴⁸ Teresa, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

¹⁴⁹ Anne, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

¹⁵⁰ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁵¹ Melhuish, *Introduction to Teaching*. For example, a version of the Survey was implemented at Whitelands College, with urban schools replacing the village settings: Ann F, Staff at Newton Park, from 1956.

held this College together through all those difficult times.’¹⁵² Inspired and insightful, she showed her willingness to fight to establish Newton Park as an educational institution. In the latter years of her principalship, she was recalled by her students as a remote figurehead in College life, and yet at the same time she was remembered by many for personal acts of support and kindness and portrayed as approachable and friendly. As a principal, Dawson was a strong leader of the staff team and of the students, and former students and colleagues cite her willingness to support them through difficult times; the student records show the level of attention she gave many individuals. Dawson understood all these complexities and contradictions of leadership, and acknowledged that ‘as soon as you become a principal you become a sort of figure and people cease to think you're human.’ She went on to describe leadership as:

Something like nuclear power – invisible, inaudible, difficult to talk about, but in its effects, colossal...the essential qualities of leadership are...mental toughness and strength of will, the power of inspiring confidence in followers, imagination, to be master of one's own profession, humanity based on real respect for human beings of all ranks...sheer quality of personality...dynamism, ambition, knowing where you are going, convincing followers, able to listen and respond to other's ideas, self-critical, modest and learn from mistakes.¹⁵³

It is clear from this description that Mary Dawson did not view leadership as a gendered role, but rather as a set of identifiable skills to be honed. This challenges Edwards' view that women principals needed to adopt masculine traits in order to be effective leaders, and that the failure and demise of the women's colleges was inevitable because they had eschewed masculine leadership in favour of encouraging a feminine culture.¹⁵⁴ In the early days of their existence it may have been in the interests of these colleges to portray themselves as feminine, and thereby establish reputations of gentility in order to attract students. However, in their post-war form, a new degree of professionalism was called for, which is suggested by Dawson's description of leadership here. Some principals of women's colleges continued to epitomise the criticisms of the McNair Report – they failed to update their practices, avoided change and development, and as a

¹⁵² Bath and Wilts Chronicle, *Principal Retires*, June 30th 1968. The quote is from Chair of Governors, Alderman Lock.

¹⁵³ Mary Dawson, Speech, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, 27th July 1958.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, *Women*, p.156.

result their institutions remained small and introspective.¹⁵⁵ Edwards cites Alice Skillicorn, the Principal of Homerton College, Cambridge, who 'did not see the necessity to adapt College procedures to conform to contemporary mores.'¹⁵⁶ Dawson however, kept abreast of the shifting policies of education through her involvement with external networks, along with other colleges and their principals on the regional and national stage.

As previously discussed, during Dawson's life and career, her position as an independent, single woman in a leadership role meant that she had frequently been required to negotiate – whether the negative interpretations of spinsterhood, the manoeuvrings of the 'tripartite partnership' of local and national government or societal expectations of feminine behaviour. This was true of the large cohort of educated women who had come to the fore due to the specific conditions of twentieth century society. Dawson was clearly ambitious and determined in her actions and language, yet she contradicted the type which Hunt describes as being 'categorised as unfeminine, and therefore masculine' – she was wholly unlike this stereotype of other women in her position.¹⁵⁷ In a speech describing the teaching profession of her youth, Dawson talked of 'the traditional schoolma'am, once viewed as traditional, repressive, dehumanised.'¹⁵⁸ The women teachers of the new era moved away from these associations, and Dawson never saw herself in this light; neither did her students, describing her as ladylike, elegant and well-dressed. Nor was she a woman lacking understanding, empathy and knowledge of the world, and she shows through her correspondence that she remained open-minded throughout her life. Carol Dyhouse asserts that many principals in Dawson's position were spinsters who had focussed all their energies on their careers, and had great difficulty with the idea of students prioritising marriage over studies and future jobs.¹⁵⁹ For her own part, Dawson was far more pragmatic and supportive in her attitude. Many examples exist of her willingness to support individuals, such as the couple who chose early marriage over completion of their qualifications. Later, she helped the same couple return to study. In speeches she

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p.13.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p.156.

¹⁵⁷ Hunt, *Lessons for Life*, p.24.

¹⁵⁸ Mary Dawson, Speech, Distribution of Awards to Nurses, Orthopaedic Hospital, 13th July 1950. Dawson's speeches contain descriptions of the professional woman, and in doing so give clues to the way she viewed and presented herself.

¹⁵⁹ Dyhouse, *Students*, p.94.

also advised parents against making absolute rules for their offspring, and recommended understanding and liberality in dealing with difficult situations:

My experience is that it is much better to go along with young people who want to get married than to say 'thou shalt not' because I think that is the one way to force them into marriage... I have often, behind the scenes, tried to persuade parents not to take the heavy hand about this.¹⁶⁰

Inevitably she had to deal with unplanned pregnancy amongst the student body, but again, she displays no outward negativity. Instead she remained pragmatic. In cases of pregnancy and early marriage, her strongest emotion seems to be an underlying disappointment that courses are abandoned. One former student speculated that:

I don't think Dilly in a sense was disapproving, I think hurt that somebody would do that, that would be her line... I think she accepted that people were going to fall in love – alright she may have been single but she certainly didn't worry.¹⁶¹

Dawson followed the careers and lives of her students with continued interest, acting as advisor, advocate and counsellor. She was the opposite of the out-of-touch spinster, displaying modern attitudes and opinions. One student wrote to her 'I am grateful to you for your kind advice. It was a great relief to be able to turn to someone who was sympathetic and understanding.'¹⁶² Mary Dawson's pragmatic and understanding nature is fully demonstrated in this speech:

Parents have many hurdles to jump but one of the most tricky seems to be that of over-possessiveness. It is a nasty hidden snare usually most dangerous to those parents who truly believe they have the real interests of their children at heart. To grow up to independence is natural and right for the child, but to make the sacrifice of freely allowing this growth and not standing in the way of the child is the hardest lesson for some parents. The tragedy is that, by this possessiveness, parents usually lose the very affection for which they are craving...not even parents can own a human soul. We are merely stewards privileged to protect them and care for them for a brief time but, as maturity approaches, duty bound to let them go.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

¹⁶¹ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony. 'Dilly' was the nickname the students gave Mary Dawson.

¹⁶² Letter, Former student to Mary Dawson, Student Records.

¹⁶³ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Argyle Young Families Association*, 14th February 1950.

Mary Dawson's early interest in psychology also proved useful, as she was called upon to rise to a wide variety of challenges. The College's early struggles had been reported on in the Bath and Bristol newspapers, and local opinion seems to have been supportive to their plight. Dawson noted:

The interesting thing was that when we were going through this awful phase everybody sympathised with us so much and we were tremendously popular. That was rather pleasant. When we came out to Newton Park, and we had a lovely house and lovely curtains and lovely furniture, new, we suddenly became very unpopular because people were jealous of all we had. I learned a lot about human nature at this time.¹⁶⁴

It is apparent that the local press perspective shifts over two decades, reflecting this change. In 1947 headlines stated, 'No home of their own yet' and 'Paradise not yet attained'. In later years, they change to discussions of 'This Grandiose College' and comments such as 'Councillor: I'm sick of this extravagance.'¹⁶⁵

Dawson identified the change in tone as reflecting basic human nature; in the early years, the College's struggles were the same as everybody else's, since there were shortages of accommodation and building materials which affected the entire nation. Once the College had established itself at Newton Park itself, the students were far less visible in Bath itself, and as residents on a country estate, deemed to be in a privileged position. Furthermore, throughout the long 1950s, a city as small as Bath was supporting three separate flagship colleges, each undergoing expansion. In their efforts to build up the educational reputation of Bath, the city councillors faced criticism from within their own ranks and from the public, who felt that the colleges were disproportionately funded from local budgets. Complaints cite the needs of the Bath population as a whole, and misunderstandings about the financial situation abound. The local authority was certainly ambitious – as well as the developments at Newton Park College, in 1960 the City of Bath College of Domestic Science moved into new purpose-built premises at Sion Hill. At the same time, Bath Academy of Art, although established at Corsham Court in

¹⁶⁴ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

¹⁶⁵ Bath Chronicle and Herald, 'I'm sick of this extravagance', 10th March 1967. The particular focus of these comments is pianos. Numerous press references to pianos appear in Mary Dawson's archive collections, throughout her years as Principal. In 1961, a press report stated 'Newton Park pianos: the reasons why – Bath's Teacher Training College at Newton Park needs another 17 pianos because it is the only college in the South West which provides a specialist course in Music. These points were made by Alderman G. D. Lock in answering yet another "piano debate" at Bath Education Committee meeting on Wednesday.' Bath and Wilts Chronicle, 'Newton Park Pianos: The Reasons Why', 16.11.61, Mary Dawson Collection.

Wiltshire, also funded by Bath City Council, was enjoying a national and international reputation as a centre for art and art education.

By the time the College reached its twenty-first anniversary, the Bath Chronicle stated:

As Newton Park College gets ready to celebrate its 21st, it's time this cash quibbling stopped. College's relationship with Bath has not been smooth. A veil of misunderstanding and ignorance has shrouded the College for many years. Even now, twenty-one years after the first students started work in temporary quarters in Bath, the feeling still hangs about that it is an expensive luxury, whose extravagant demands are a constant drain on the city's resources.¹⁶⁶

Mary Dawson, tenacious in her ambitions for her College, constantly fought to develop its reputation. In recalling the criticisms of the 'poverty' of women's colleges of the past, she was determined that Newton Park should be equipped properly. However, Dawson and her students appear to have done their best to counter the 'misunderstanding and ignorance' around the accusations of extravagance, albeit that they were only partially successful. They were active in local schools and involved in projects in Bath, and the importance of a commitment to the community beyond their own, featured in the College's *Aims and Philosophy* document, stating 'Students have taken a large part in helping with Social Welfare work and with help for European and Arab refugees.'¹⁶⁷ In the early 1960s, when public opinion in Bath, as expressed by the local paper was at its most critical, the Students' Union instigated an open day for local people to view the College for themselves.¹⁶⁸ The lessons of wider community involvement and their responsibility as a local authority college, were also embedded into the teacher training course, and Newton Park students participated in the activities of Newton St Loe Church, in working men's clubs, as well as Bath Social Services, old and young people's clubs, play centres, and children's homes.¹⁶⁹

Dawson was also in a position of advocacy through her many public speaking engagements. Throughout her tenure at Newton Park College, she was invited to address prizegivings, speech days, and events in schools, colleges, and a wide range of public bodies. Copies of her speeches fill several folders in her archive

¹⁶⁶ Bath Chronicle and Herald, 'Its time this cash quibbling stopped', 23rd June 1967.

¹⁶⁷ Mary Dawson, *College Aims and Philosophy*, 1954.

¹⁶⁸ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁶⁹ Dawson, *College Aims & Philosophy*, 1954.

collection. They serve as a reminder of her own work, but also her own advocacy and importance. It is interesting, therefore, to note that throughout her speeches and writing, Dawson demonstrates that she is well read, informed and interested in current affairs and theoretical ideas. In many of the words she delivered there are examples of contemporary educational thinking and broad knowledge. She wrote engagingly about current affairs and the events of the time; former students recall that she announced the death of President John F Kennedy during a drama performance, as soon as the news broke on the evening of 22nd November 1963.¹⁷⁰ In demonstrating such wide interests and learning, Dawson exemplifies the holistic learning she was so keen to encourage within the college community. Furthermore she was able to address a wide range of audiences, appealing to their interests but also providing stimulating and thought-provoking subject matter. In these speeches she appears engaging, interesting and relevant, citing examples of plays, novels, current affairs, biography, non-fiction, scientific theory, research, psychology and academic thought. All of this writing is thoughtfully prepared, with marginalia providing evidence of redrafting in order to achieve the appropriate tone and content. At the same time, she is not afraid to be outspoken – in accepting Princess Elizabeth's speech at the opening of the College in early 1950, Dawson said:

I have to thank you even more on behalf of a group of people to whom this day matters very much but who are unable to be here in person...I refer of course, to our old students...These old students, and in particular the Founder Students, were builders of this College just as surely as the workmen were builders of the visible fabric. They realised that they had the responsibility of laying the foundations which would form their College and inspire its members in the years to come. As pioneers in a new venture, they appreciated the fact that it is the qualities and characters of the people who make up a community that matter most, and they will rejoice that by your presence today you have crowned their efforts...¹⁷¹

The effect of the cumulative aggravations experienced in the early years of the College are evident in this speech. In later correspondence, Ministry of Education representative Sir John Maud expressed his own thanks as a guest at the occasion, adding pointedly 'I hope the College will go from success to success and

¹⁷⁰ Helen, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁷¹ Dawson, Principal's Vote of Thanks, Opening Ceremony of Newton Park College, 2nd March 1950, Scrapbook 1, *Archive 1945-1959*.

that when next you have a Royal Visitor there will be no need to speak of past frustrations!’¹⁷²

During her years at Newton Park, Mary Dawson developed numerous personal and professional relationships with those around her – staff, governors, councillors, academics and colleagues. In Bath, this included the architect Molly Gerrard, who worked with Dawson to make the necessary adaptations to the College as it expanded throughout the 1950s and ‘60s. A forceful character herself, who operated in a male-dominated profession, Gerrard recalled that:

I was asked to meet with her at Whitelands Training College to assimilate her ideas. The immediate and instinctive mutual trust and understanding felt at our first meeting was the initial link in the chain, which has lengthened and strengthened over twenty-one years. The succession of students will know to whom the College owes its present position of high achievement, and during many frustrations and disappointments, Miss Dawson’s courage and selfless singlemindedness of purpose inspired me and all who worked for the College...but there were many dark days ...when the very existence of the College was in jeopardy.¹⁷³

Although written many years later, the same tone of respect and admiration is present in a personal letter written to Mary Dawson in the early years of the College, when a period of ill health threatened more serious repercussions for the progress of the College:

May I say how greatly I admire your courage, your tolerance of circumstances and events which would surely have broken many sterner hearts, and above all perhaps your unwavering, unlimited personal effort for, and belief in, the ultimate Newton Park College...if and when we see this achieved, believe me I shall rejoice for your sake before admitting any personal feelings that moment may have for me...may you succeed without sacrificing your health and spirit.¹⁷⁴

These personal qualities were utilised further afield. As previously stated, Dawson was amongst a relatively small group of professional women in the field of teacher training, a group who knew and gained strength from one another through their work and professional associations. One such association was the ATCDE, and its

¹⁷² Letter, Sir John Maud to Mary Dawson, Scrapbook 1, *Archive 1945-1959*.

¹⁷³ Gerrard, *Architect’s View*.

¹⁷⁴ Letter, Molly Gerrard to Mary Dawson, 5th December 1947, Scrapbook 1, *Archive 1945-1959*.

forerunner the TCA, who campaigned in support of the teacher training sector, supplying research and information on relevant issues. An example is the fight for equal pay. Women teachers were amongst the first female workers to be considered for equal pay and discussion and campaigning had been taking place since the interwar period. The pay issue had been part of the McNair proposals, as a means by which more women could be recruited into a service which would be so heavily reliant on their participation. It would prove to be several years before general legislation was passed to enable the issue to be fully addressed, and the delay frustrated many in the profession. One former Newton Park student recalled:

When I started teaching I was getting less than men, when I went in to teaching they were just saying women had to have equal pay for equal jobs. I think, even then when they did it, it was the second or third year I was teaching. They did it gradually, so it took them three or four years before we actually got the full rate, so I'd been teaching for 5 years before I got the same rate as a man.¹⁷⁵

Dawson emphasised that such changes had come about as a result of women proving their value to the profession. She said:

In the last ten years I have watched the crumbling away of men's prejudice against equal pay. Women have won by the magnificent way they have carried an enormous burden.¹⁷⁶

Dawson's involvement with the ATCDE and its campaigns can be traced through the archive documents of the association, and her name appears frequently from the 1950s onwards. The work with which she was involved gives an indication of the ATCDE concerns, and she had roles on the Three Year Course Committee (1955) and the Clearing House Committee (1956) which investigated the allocation of candidates to the colleges. She sat on the Executive Committee from 1956, and was voted in as Vice Chair of the Principals' Panel in the same year. The following year, 1957-58, she was Chair of the Principal's Panel, and in that role became central to discussions and resolutions concerning the expansion of the colleges in the late 1950s and beyond.

¹⁷⁵ Ann, female student, 1951-53. Oral testimony.

¹⁷⁶ Mary Dawson, Speech 'Education for Equal Status' to National Council of Women, September 23rd 1952. The Council's history states that 'Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, [the Council] was particularly active in working to remove discrimination against women in all areas and in encouraging women to play a full role in society.' National Council of Women, Our History, 1950s available at <http://ncwgb.org/history/> [Accessed 24th September 2017].

In her history of the ATCDE, Joan Browne notes that ‘for a small association it was more effective than one might have expected, as it was run by the most prominent members of the training college hierarchy.’¹⁷⁷ She cites Helen Simpson OBE, honorary secretary from 1950 – 1966, as an indication of the kinds of personalities who were involved in the ATCDCE, noting that:

The interests of teacher education were well served for many years not only by her knowledge of the scene, but also by her standing which enabled her to approach senior Civil Servants and Vice Chancellors as an equal. They may not always have wanted to hear her point of view, but her engaging personality made it difficult to refuse her a hearing.¹⁷⁸

The leadership of the association was influential, and put forward the most progressive opinions to government, through:

a formula of sub-committees which gathered evidence direct from its members and colleges, prepared and produced reports – on the grounds that if there was any unease it was best to meet it with explanation and reasoned discussion.¹⁷⁹

Browne further asserts that:

in this period the interests of successive governments and the ATCDE coincided...[government] needed the active support of the Association to expand the teacher training system with some degree of economy, and the teacher-trainers needed expansion, the lengthening of the course, and participation in graduate and post-graduate training, if their higher education ambitions were to be fulfilled.¹⁸⁰

In conclusion, this chapter has analysed the ways in which Mary Dawson’s work at Newton Park College embraced progressive ideas about holistic education and the value of the individual. These ideas benefitted her own students as well as contributing to the training college sector overall, through external networks. The chapter has shown how women in the long 1950s experienced the growth of the teaching profession, and the multiple ways in which they could express citizenship, whether as employees in the workplace supporting the economy, or as wives and

¹⁷⁷ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.41.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. A photograph of Helen Simpson features in Mary Dawson’s papers. *Newton Park College events*, Photograph Album 1946-1959, Mary Dawson Collection.

¹⁷⁹ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.78.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.246.

mothers helping to re-establish family life. Although now striking a note of 'untidy contradiction', an appreciation of the value of these roles is important in understanding the period.¹⁸¹ As trained professionals, the women of Newton Park College were empowered to shape their own lives and influence the lives of their pupils; they were also conduits of change in terms of the increasing numbers of women in higher education. Dawson was also in a position to enjoy a degree of autonomy whilst an employee and servant of the local authority. This can be seen in her insistence on male staff despite overarching rules to the contrary, as well as the College focus on developing their own curriculum innovation through the Village Survey. The final chapter will assess the developments which occurred in the 1960s and the final years of Dawson's career, as Newton Park College embraced changes in society, in teacher training and in education.

¹⁸¹ Heron, *Truth Dare Promise*, p.4.

Chapter 6

Into the 60s – Education, Institution and Society in Transition

The original buildings are suitably adapted, and modern additions provide a large library, gymnasium, assembly hall, an art and craft and music centre, and on the scientific side, laboratories for Rural and General Science and biology, together with a Rural Crafts workshop. There are also extensive gardens and a small dairy farm.¹

Twenty-one years is roughly the period since the publication of the McNair Report. Years that have been crowded with changes and evolutions. The Colleges have seen changes in size, in status, in structure in government, in the length and conception of the courses, in the attitudes and responsibilities of the staffs, and equally in those of the students.²

We have fashioned during the past 40 years – despite the eleven-plus – a Junior School of which any country might be proud...Finest achievement of all, we have learned to regard the child as a person, not as a receptacle for knowledge, or as merely an apprentice to adulthood.³

As the 1950s drew to a close, more challenges emerged for national education. As a generation of women asserted their right to choose the combination of career and motherhood, there was a lowering in the age of marriage, and a continued rise in the birth-rate. By the late 1950s, a rise in the numbers of pupils staying on at school after the statutory leaving age, exacerbated the ongoing shortage of teachers. Anxieties over 'wastage', as women exercised agency in their choice of professional training *and* marriage, caused much concern as the shortage grew worse. By 1958, calls for a rapid response to the crisis brought the teaching and training professions and their associations into cooperation with government in the search for solutions. The acute need for teachers put many of the longer-term ambitions of the teacher training colleges at risk. The training colleges' long held desire for a three year course, for maintenance of the standard of candidates,

¹ University of Bristol Institute of Education, (Bristol: Arrowsmith,1967) (BSU/1/30) p.4.

² Dawson, *Twenty-one years*. p.1

³ Dent, *To Cover the Country*, p.138.

along with national calls for a rise in the school leaving age and for smaller classes, 'all rested on having more teachers so conflicted with each other.'⁴ It was at this point that Mary Dawson was Chair of the Principals' Panel of the ATCDE, and the following chapter demonstrates the ways that Dawson, and her College responded to this societal change on a broader scale.

The previous chapter illustrated that the 'dual role' of work and domesticity had become the model to which many women aspired. In a pragmatic way, Mary Dawson supported the idea of the dual role or 'bi-modalism' for women. It was, after all, a considerable change from the situation which had existed for her and her own generation in the 1920s and 1930s, who were forced to choose between marriage and teaching at a time when one excluded the other. Dawson was interested in where these new social conditions would lead, and noted the demographic shift that the 1961 census revealed. For the first time in over a century, there were more unmarried men than women, a gender imbalance which gave women more choice in exercising their agency. It was a situation which Mary Dawson predicted would alter the expectations of young women, stating that:

It is the first time in our history that this has happened. Wars and higher mortality in boy babies have in previous generations created at all times a considerable surplus of women. This is a basic change, a deep new current in national life. What will be the consequence of it?⁵

Her own life had, after all, been governed by the gender imbalance caused by the First World War, and whether she had used this an excuse or an opportunity, it had given rise to a career, financial independence and the 'full and abundant life' that Dawson, and others like her, had enjoyed. In advocating the bimodal pattern as an ideal, Dawson was balancing idealism with a new reality in women's lives. They could become the useful democratic citizens and influential role models that she and women like her had been, *and* they could choose to become wives and mothers. Later, they could also return to their important roles as teachers. Dawson would never lose sight of the very different conditions that her own generation had faced, reminding her students that 'women, if they so wish, can look forward to

⁴ Gosden, *Evolution*, p.285.

⁵ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963. Mary Dawson's topic on the occasion was 'Investment in women' and she discussed the imminent and anticipated Robbins report.

marriage and a home. The spinsters who have played such a big role in English education life...are passing from the scene.’⁶ Here she is referring to the ‘spinster schoolma’am’, that denigrated figure; exemplified in the countless women who had chosen the teaching profession as their careers during the period of the marriage bar. She said:

Present trends in social life make the objection that ‘she will only get married’ quite out of date. She needs a career for economic reasons, and her own security. She needs it to enrich her own life and interests. She needs it for her own status, and self-respect. Career, marriage and career again – that is the pattern that the more thoughtful of them plan. They feel they can have the best of both worlds.⁷

Dawson believed passionately in a woman’s right to ‘a career...and public service.’⁸ She said:

There was a time when the two careers of a woman interfered seriously with each other and even mutually excluded one another but all that is gone...more and more, women are able to reconcile these two activities, and expect to do so... they can organise their lives...to make the best of both worlds...the majority of my own students continue to teach after marriage...they find that their lives are enriched by the sharing of their wider interests in their careers. A career full of interest helps to make one a more vital and stimulating person.⁹

The previous chapter has highlighted the contrasting expressions of citizenship which women in the long 1950s could choose. Giles affirms that ‘although the notion of fulfilment through paid work was presented in the literature of the 1950s, it is clear that women’s sense of autonomy was also to be found in the combined roles of worker, wife and mother.’¹⁰ It would not be until the later period of the 1970s that the domestic role became polarized from public work, and women’s more visible contribution to society through public roles came to be considered of greater value.¹¹ Sylvia Walby gives the opinion that women were in fact ‘exiled from full citizenship’ due to the constraints imposed upon them by domestic

⁶ Mary Dawson, Speech, Bishop Fox’s School Prize Distribution, Taunton, 3rd February 1955.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

⁹ Ibid. In stating ‘all that is gone’, Dawson is likely to be referring to the marriage bar.

¹⁰ Giles, *Parlour and Suburb*, p.86.

¹¹ Catherine Hall, *White, Male & Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism & History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) p.44.

responsibility¹², whilst Canning and Rose suggest that citizenship can only be practised in the public domain; women's roles at home or as 'reproducers of the nation' therefore undermine their role as citizens.¹³ The seeds of this polarization were already being sown during the long 1950s, through texts which established 'housewifery as an obstacle to female independence, civic involvement and social usefulness.'¹⁴ Influential texts such as de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, published in English in 1953, asserted that 'A woman's work within the home...gives her no autonomy; it is not directly useful to society, it does not open out on the future, it produces nothing.'¹⁵ As these ideas and perspectives led to a polarisation of experience in later decades, it is understandable that the women involved in the oral history interviews for this thesis fail to identify with the feminist stance expressed in the 1970s, since it cast negative assumptions on choices they themselves had made. Lewis has described the Women's Movement's emphasis on 'personal freedom and self-expression' along with the demand for 'greater female autonomy.'¹⁶ Yet the women who trained at Newton Park College and worked as teachers had already experienced personal freedom, self-expression and autonomy through their work. If these women experienced and testify to just these things in their lives and careers, it is unsurprising that they 'didn't see what the fuss was about' in terms of the feminist messages of the late 1960s and 1970s.¹⁷ There is also the consideration that marriage presented a degree of freedom in itself, as this quote demonstrates:

They didn't think it was right for her to share rooms with single girls because she'd been married. I think she was treating her with respect, actually respecting her rights as a married woman; she was a free woman.¹⁸

Women were, at the time, responding to the messages at large in the period which emphasised the importance of citizenship, through participation in both the home and the workplace. Claire Langhamer describes the dichotomy: 'too little and the economy would falter; too much and society would suffer. Feelings loomed large in

¹² Ibid, p.42 ; Sylvia Walby, 'Is Citizenship Gendered?' *Sociology*, 8.2 (1994) 379-395, p.391.

¹³ Canning, Rose, *Gender*, p.9.

¹⁴ Rebecca Munford, Melanie Waters, *Feminism & Popular Culture* (London: I B Tauris, 2014) p.84.

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Published in France, 1949. English Translation 1953) cited in Munford, Waters, *Feminism & Popular Culture*, p.73.

¹⁶ Lewis, *Women since 1945*, p.61.

¹⁷ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁸ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

this discussion.¹⁹ Economic and social stability required women's contribution, not as a temporary solution, as had been the case in wartime, but as a new permanent model for the labour force. These developments highlight the competing ideologies of the period which affected women. The new pattern which was adopted by many, of work, family and work again, became familiar for many women, and especially for teachers; many entered the profession in the first place with an understanding and appreciation of the role's flexibility. Spencer asserts that this pattern – the portfolio career – was in fact established by the 1950s generation. Teaching in particular was a career choice which favoured the pattern, and as teachers remained in such high demand in the workforce, women were often able to dictate the terms of their return to work; numerous examples of this exist in the oral history testimonies of former students. The oral testimony featured in this study highlights the ways in which women progressed from work, to motherhood and back to work in a way that suited their own lifestyles:

I taught for four years at a junior, two years at the secondary school, then I went back as a music specialist part-time in the primary schools because I was married by then and wanted to start a family. I taught here there and everywhere around the area as a peripatetic teacher then, teaching strings and in a couple of schools particularly I was there for ten, fifteen years and I only retired last year after forty-five years.²⁰

Arranged in chronological order, these examples show the experience of some of the Newton Park students:

The headmistress at the time didn't think that you could be married and she said you can't do two jobs properly so I thought, that's not the place to stay.²¹

I left teaching when pregnant, returned when youngest child was settled at school and did supply; the job dropped into my lap...I could take them to school with me, bring them home in the evening and the school was less than a mile from home.²²

¹⁹ Langhamer, 'Feelings', p.79.

²⁰ Alison A, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

²¹ Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony.

²² Margaret, female student, 1949-51. Written testimony.

Another Head Master approached me in Plymouth and he said 'Can you come and help out?' Can you come and teach while somebody was away. He knew I had got my baby, he said 'It's alright,' he said 'there's a thing of sand that he can play in while you teach.'²³

I spent 3 years at...an Oxfordshire 'show school' and then I moved to Bristol and spent 4 years [there]. I then left to get married and returned to teaching when my daughter was fourteen. Eventually having left teaching to get qualifications in IT I did home tuition for about 6 years when I decided to retire.²⁴

I remember somebody coming to me when they were desperate for teachers then, and so desperate that they actually set up a nursery just for teachers' children, which is why I was able to go back to teaching quite early.²⁵

Yes, I did various little jobs whilst the children were tiny and then I got a part-time job teaching at an RAF hospital... the one children's ward... I was just the sole teacher there, and I did that for...fifteen, sixteen years?²⁶

The Deputy Head was Acting Head for my first term of teaching and she was very supportive. I was married and pregnant by the time I started teaching.²⁷

I worked until three weeks before he was born and went back when he was three months old, and for the first year as he went to a childminder and after I said "no, no more, I want to enjoy my own child. I don't- I'm sorry I don't care how hard up we are, I am jolly well...not going to go into work, I want time to be with my son", and I am so glad I took those eleven years, I really am.²⁸

This individual had fully expected to return to work, and was under pressure from her school to do so, but she chose instead to be with her son. Other women remember personal calls from colleagues and headteachers, requesting their

²³ Valerie, female student, 1951-53. Oral testimony.

²⁴ Wendy, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

²⁵ Ann, female student, 1951-53. Oral testimony.

²⁶ Teresa, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony. (RAF is Royal Air Force).

²⁷ Helen, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

²⁸ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

return to work as soon as possible, and suggesting creative ways to manage school and home. One particular student, for example, stated:

You can tell how short of teachers they were, because I had a telephone call from a Head to do some supply for a little village school....I said, "I'd love it but I can't possibly do it, I haven't got a car and I've got two small children" They said, "That's fine. We will send you a taxi. Bring your children, pop your boy in reception class and the cooks will look after the baby."²⁹

Although these situations seem casual and arbitrary, they are nonetheless illustrative of the arrangements many teachers experienced at a time when their services were so much in demand. The bi-modal career pattern fostered during the period, and promoted at Newton Park College by Mary Dawson, allowed these particular women to choose when and in what manner to leave their jobs, in the knowledge that they would be needed and sought after when they chose to return. She said:

These young people want careers because they want full and satisfying lives. in a clear-sighted and positive way they look forward to marriage and home and a family and to returning to the career for which they have been educated...this is the blueprint.³⁰

Teaching was therefore a practical demonstration of citizenship, since it provided visible roles in the community where women could play their part. Individuals, schools, colleges and higher education as a whole all benefited from the changes to the teaching profession in the post-war period, and the influence and vision of women like Dawson and other female principals were central to the process. She asserted that:

Liberalising influences have slowly spread...Women have been largely responsible for this change and we want more, and not less, of her influence in the educational world. I am sure that this could be said of other professions.³¹

Dawson believed in, practised and promoted the right of women to shape their own lives, to advance their own agency and to live 'abundantly'. This was all

²⁹ Jo, female student, 1954-56. Oral testimony.

³⁰ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

³¹ Ibid.

expressed through the work and ethos of the College. The students themselves felt empowered by their experiences at College, which served them well as they approached their careers. One recalled that 'I knew what I was doing life-wise while I was at college, I got a lot out of it', and this feeling is echoed by others, who attest to the enrichment of their experiences whilst at Newton Park.³² Students describe how 'it was all about opportunities and experiences that were new' and that 'this what was so good about the place you know, that you were expected to take charge.'³³ Another remembered that 'it released me from my old life and gave me a new opportunity to have a different kind of life. That was the contribution it made to me as a person.'³⁴

College had prepared them to be confident individuals, with an awareness of the part they could play. According to another student, 'it was where I found myself. I found that people respected me, I found I could cope, I could organise things. I became a person in my own right.'³⁵

This evidence reflects the considerable growth in part time work at this time, which is often cited as a limitation to women's employment. However in the case of teachers, part time hours enabled a return to work and re-integration into the profession. The possibility of part time hours was often used as a bargaining tool for schools in persuading trained teachers to return to work. It was therefore seen as a favourable option, which allowed women more choice and control over their careers.

The teaching profession had benefited from a loosening of many strictures which the interwar generation had encountered. It was also a strong workforce, with security, good pay, a good pension, and strong union representation; it also provided the attractive possibility of combining work and family not possible before, and a radical change which offered a practical solution for many. One of Klein's sociological studies into the working mother,³⁶ undertaken at the time

³² Alison A, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

³³ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony. Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

³⁴ Liz, female student, 1961-64. Oral testimony.

³⁵ Naomi, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

³⁶ Elizabeth Singer-More, 'The necessary factfinding has only just begun': Women, Social Science and the reinvention of the 'Working mother' in the 1950s', *Women's Studies* 40 (2011) 974-1005. Singer-More describes the 'new social science of maternal employment', undertaken in order to understand the reality of bimodalism amidst concerns that working mothers undermined children's psychological development.

emphasised the great advantages of teaching as a career, compared to many others:

Not until other professions can offer a similarly flexible pattern, combined with virtual certainty of employment, will they be able to compete for highly qualified women on more or less equal terms with teaching. Overcoming the teacher shortage...ranks high among the social priorities of our day...[It is] a profession which is generally felt to be better adjusted than most to marriage and family life.³⁷

Dawson observed that many of her students had chosen teaching for this reason. They wanted 'the best of both worlds' and exploited the opportunities available to them.³⁸ With flexibility of employment and high demand for their contribution, women teachers were much more likely to return to work after having children, and further use their skills. Teaching had been a single woman's job in the past, but in the post-war period it became dominated by married women. These married women were highly visible in the working world, acting as the positive examples and role models, which the McNair Report had recommended as an ideal.

The overwhelming change from single to married women's domination of the profession had taken place in Dawson's lifetime, during which she had also witnessed the state of singleness itself move from negative descriptions of 'spinster' to the liberated and more positive tone demonstrated in the designation 'bachelor girl'.³⁹ As a result of the 1944 Education Act, the 1950s and 1960s saw 'the first generation to grow up taking secondary education for granted.' Penny Tinkler's research into representations of women in the early 1960s asserts that in a period which itself represents this greater independence, 'youth on the move is embodied by the young single woman.'⁴⁰ The single woman has therefore, within a generation, become the polar opposite of the interwar spinster; she is no longer a figure to be feared, reviled and ridiculed, since she now represents the excitement and possibility of her era. What separates them is the free availability of education, which provided the opportunities to exercise choice and greater agency, and the growing confidence this brings.

³⁷ Klein, 'Professional Womanpower', p.185.

³⁸ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

³⁹ Holden *et al*, 'Introduction' p.318.

⁴⁰ Penny Tinkler, 'Teenage Girls on the Move: Spatial mobility and the cultural lives of girls growing up in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s', *Conference Paper, Women's History Network*, (Leeds Trinity University, September 2016).

As married women became the majority group in many schools, they too grew in confidence and saw the possibilities for roles in senior or leadership positions. Leadership remained largely a male preserve, but the saturation of teaching and presence of married women in such high numbers began to be seen at all levels of the profession. The growing confidence of these women is reflected in the careers of the oral history subjects in this study. Of the twenty-nine people interviewed, the vast majority are women who returned to teaching roles after having children. Most discuss their life and career choices with language such as 'I wanted' or 'I decided', and several of the featured interview subjects reached senior management level in their schools. Archival documents demonstrate that former students keenly reported back to Dawson when women were promoted to senior positions and so although male head teachers still dominated during the long 1950s, it would be wrong to suggest that this was universal. Women increasingly took on senior posts; the shortage of teachers meant that many opportunities existed for promotion, and many women entered senior roles relatively early in their careers. Shirley described her own experience:

I got a deputy headship at quite a young age ...I really enjoyed primary schools and from being a fairly young deputy I was a fairly young head...thirty six-ish, thirty seven. Ultimately I was head of one of the largest primary schools in Coventry after they amalgamated infants and junior schools.⁴¹

Another woman reports being impressed that, at a new teaching post, she had been interviewed by a young female head. Another became a deputy head, having returned to teaching after a period at home with children.⁴² Yet another reflected that:

You could choose, more or less, where you wanted to go. I had that job [Jo had been offered a job whilst on teaching practice] One of the students I know went straight into a deputy headship...A special friend of mine, after she was accepted for a job, asked the headmaster if she could have her first two weeks off for her honeymoon and that was granted. A lot of people did not stay in schools very long. If they did not like the school, they moved. There was no shortage of jobs at all, so you could pick and choose.⁴³

⁴¹ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

⁴² Meg, female student, 1951-53. Written testimony.

⁴³ Jo, female student, 1954-56. Oral testimony.

The fact that these women and their roles were commented upon to Dawson shows the level of interest in the new possibilities placed before women; they were part of the real educational revolution that the 1944 act heralded.

These comments, and the ways that the College alumni express themselves, illustrate the language of agency. All the former students report finding employment with ease; they were able to make demands within their jobs, and have those demands met. When challenged by limitations, they sought, and found, opportunities elsewhere – if one school could not fulfil expectation, then other schools were available.⁴⁴ These women expected, and found work which suited their capabilities and situations. Dawson and her students express their experiences in life and at College in particular ways, using particular words and phrases. It is the language of action, excitement, ambition and possibility. Teachers needed to be ‘lively’ and ‘vital’ with a ‘zest’ for living. A student in the early 1960s, described the ‘liberating’ nature of what she experienced at Newton Park:

Education is liberating, and it's liberating in different ways...I'm pleased I was able to use my skills and bring together all the things that I'd already learned, that I learned as an adult – from all kinds of different sources.⁴⁵

This specific use of language is striking. The students are ‘pioneers’, with a ‘strong fibre’ in the way they approached life. Dawson talks of victories, triumphs, and ‘heroism’ and proudly describes rebellion in her statement that ‘We were the first squatters in Bath.’ The many challenges in the foundation of the College were met with stoicism: ‘I just go on stolidly shoving a bit here and pushing a bit there’ said Dawson; her ‘persistence’ is met with ‘a gleam of hope.’ To the first cohort of students, Dawson inspired ideas of ‘a wealth of possibilities’ – they could anticipate ‘freedoms and rights’, ‘an exhilarating sense of adventure’. Their words read like a joyous battle cry, even in the face of uncertainty. But above all, Mary Dawson’s language was pro-women, pro-education, and always forward-looking. Dawson actively promoted the agency of women, through her many speeches, through her work, and through the work her students went on to do. She aimed to

⁴⁴ Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony: ‘the headmistress at the time didn’t think that you could be married and she said you can’t do two jobs properly so I thought, that’s not the place to stay.’

⁴⁵ Alison S, female student, 1963-66. Oral testimony.

‘develop responsible teachers of quality, able to take their proper place in society and in school as effective and inspiring leaders.’⁴⁶ Her pride in her students and the College is clear, as is her belief in the work she was doing. She stated that the Colleges of Education were ‘the most important institutions in the country, because we are turning out leaders of tomorrow.’⁴⁷

In 1955, Newton Park was described as ‘A College which for idealism of purpose is outstanding among the Colleges of Great Britain.’⁴⁸ Although this was written by a colleague of Dawson’s, it is a view which is shared – those alumni who returned to carry out interviews for this study, and other students who wrote to Dawson about their personal experiences after College, attest to the good reputation it enjoyed. In numerous letters, former students report that the progressive educational ideas practised at Newton Park were appreciated and well known in the educational world. In a letter to Dawson, one woman reported that:

When Miss L asked me where I was trained...she remarked “Good, they have the right ideas about infant play and activity”. Similarly when I went on a visit to my new school...the head teacher said “You’ll get on alright, their infant education is very progressive.”⁴⁹

Many former students agree with the sentiment expressed here. This wider reputation of Newton Park contributed to personal as well as institutional confidence. It galvanised student admission numbers as well as confirming the decision of those already in residence there and was affirmed throughout their careers.⁵⁰ Students had a sense that they were contributing to this reputation:

This was the idea – you were building something new, especially those who were doing secondary teaching in secondary modern schools – we were building something new...what I was taught in Newton Park, has been with me always.⁵¹

Some of the original cohorts of students, those who had been aware of the first faltering years of the College, took pride in their part of this:

⁴⁶ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.17.

⁴⁷ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

⁴⁸ Professor Basil Fletcher (University of Bristol Institute of Education) Foreword, Newton Park 1946-1967: 21st Anniversary Commemoration Booklet.

⁴⁹ Letter from a former student to Mary Dawson, 1950, Scrapbook 1, *Archive 1945-1959*.

⁵⁰ Helen, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

⁵¹ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

I'm very proud to have been part of the beginning of Newton Park....I've seen it grow from almost nothing into a very fine College. And I, having had such good contact with Mary Dawson for a great deal of my life, I admire her courage and her dedication to creating something to be exceedingly proud of, which I think she was.⁵²

By the late 1950s, the problem of 'wastage' in the teaching profession caused increasing concern.⁵³ As women exercise their choices within the labour market, extreme responses from government, the media and public opinion represented women as feckless users of the training system who left the profession to marry as soon as they were trained. The problem had been identified in the late 1950s, and continued for several years as teachers remained in short supply. Former students' experiences show, however, that they took the investment in their education seriously. Students were keenly aware of the issue, but also aware of the specific focus on them as women. One former student, reflecting on the kinds of long and varied careers that her particular group of friends had enjoyed, also recalled the accusations levelled at her generation and stated 'we were worth the investment'.⁵⁴

At the time, Dawson recognised and refuted accusations of wastage, pointing out that women teachers, in line with other professionals, were free to choose their own career trajectories. In defence of 'the higher education of women' in speeches and in her writing, Dawson stated that:

There are those who think that less should be spent on women's education – or putting it another way – relatively more should be spent on men. To put it crudely, from the national point of view a man teacher seems to be a good investment and a woman a poor one.⁵⁵

In 1966, the Times newspaper reported on a speech by the Secretary of State for Education and Science:

Mr. Crosland has estimated that of 300,000 women teachers recruited in the next 10 years 240,000 will leave...many leave to marry and have children. This represents a wastage of rate of four in five...over the past few years the number of married women returning to teaching has increased...the hope here is that part time teaching opportunities will attract

⁵² Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony.

⁵³ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p. 85.

⁵⁴ Alison S, female student, 1963-66. Oral testimony.

⁵⁵ Mary Dawson, *Speech, Barr's Hill School Prizegiving*, Coventry, 21st October 1965.

women back earlier and that they will then later become full time... What are the chances of the supply of teachers meeting the demand? Undoubtedly the key lies in how flexible training and teaching opportunities are made.⁵⁶

One of the solutions was the retraining of those women teachers who had left the profession to have children, providing short courses through which returning mature students could update their skills and knowledge. Newton Park College devised one such programme which was quickly and widely acknowledged as making a successful contribution to the shortage issue. In a critique in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES), the programme was praised for its far-sightedness. It provided a specific area with expertise through the re-training programme, and answered the needs of that area. Forty miles from Bath, the Wiltshire town of Swindon was in an area with significant post-war development and population growth, which experienced an acute shortage of teachers as a result. The local authority there became partners with Newton Park, in a project to retrain married women teachers and so specifically answer the acute shortages. Colleges, the TES said, 'have been straining every nerve to overcrowd students in response to urgent appeals from successive Ministers of Education for more teachers, particularly in primary schools.'⁵⁷ The Swindon programme found its solution by training successive groups of women in premises in the city, away from the main College site in Bath. The programme is also illustrative of Dawson's approach to her role as Principal, demonstrating her willingness to adapt to circumstances and update her practice. The original impetus for this scheme came from government, but its practical application was overseen by Dawson, the College governors and staff, and was later adopted in other local authorities.⁵⁸

The wastage issue became acute in the late 1950s, and would be an ongoing concern with which Government and the training colleges grappled for the next decade. Mary Dawson's role as Chair of the Principals' Panel of the ATCDE placed her at the heart of discussions about the problem. During parliamentary

⁵⁶ *Making Training Suit the Students*. The Times (London, England), Tuesday, Feb 22, 1966; pg. 11; Issue 56562.

⁵⁷ Times Educational Supplement, *The Swindon Ladies*, 2nd July 1965.

⁵⁸ Roy Hiscocks, *Unwillingly to School: An Account of the Education Service in Bath 1870-1970*, (Bath, Education Committee of Bath City Council, 1974).

debates in 1957 and 1958, the long-standing aims of educational policy were brought to the fore:

I beg to move, that this House regards the reduction of the size of classes in schools, the raising of the school-leaving age and the fuller training of teachers as desirable objectives of national policy; recognises that these objectives cannot be attained in any measurable time without a greater rate of increase in the number of teachers than that which now prevails.⁵⁹

The changes led to the crash expansion of the late 1950s and early 1960s, with '12,000 more places in colleges in 1958, a further 4,000 in 1959 and an additional 8,000 in 1960.⁶⁰ In her ATCDE role, Mary Dawson wrote to all member Colleges:

An emergency situation in the supply of teachers has arisen through the unforeseen drop, in 1957, of over 2,000 teachers above the normal wastage rate. This situation is aggravated by the continued increase in the birth-rate which has upset all calculations, and by the welcome fact that more and more children are staying on at school beyond the age of fifteen. Hence, it is estimated that if the present rate of wastage continues and other factors remain at present over the next four years, 10,000 extra teachers will be required, even to maintain the present standard of provision.⁶¹

The letter asks for a commitment from all the colleges, to consider immediate and practical ways to help the situation – 'How many additional places can be provided in September 1958? In what ways can this be done? – Lodgings, Leased houses, 'such expedients as 'doubling up'', in other ways (Give ideas).'⁶² The resulting responses and information from the colleges was then quickly collated in a response to the Minister of Education, demonstrating the way in which the ATCDE offered proactive expertise.

Between the late 1950s and the 1960s, then, the need for expansion in the teacher training colleges was constant. Keating describes this as 'a boom time' and Bath City Council, through Newton Park College, played its part.⁶³ It had begun with a small cohort of students; just forty-five had registered on the training

⁵⁹ House of Commons Debate, 14 February 1958 available from <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1958/feb/14/teachers-recruitment-and-training> [Accessed 23.6.18].

⁶⁰ Bone, *Our Calling to Fulfil*, p.25.

⁶¹ Correspondence and Subject files 1941 -1962, Letter to Principals and Correspondents, 15th May 1958, Acute Shortage of Teachers, (MSS.176/CD/AT/3/T66).

⁶² Appendix 4, Correspondence from AM Dawson, (MSS.176/CD/D/1/11).

⁶³ Keating, *History in Education*, p.5.

course in January 1946. The aim was to increase in size to 100 students within two years. In 1949, as the College finally moved to Newton Park itself, the expected 100 students became 120. By 1958, as the teacher training colleges were moving from two to three-year courses, this figure had doubled again, and what Dawson described as an 'educational explosion' meant that by 1966, a further doubling of the student body had occurred. In 1958, a specific crisis point was created as a result of the impending move from two to three-year courses. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education, Sir Edward Boyle, announced in parliament that 'the Government have decided to extend from two to three years the course of training which leads to the status of qualified teacher. This change will be made in 1960.'⁶⁴ The extra year in college would mean fewer certificated teachers entering the profession in that year.

Transition from a two to a three-year course would also mean increasing the number of students on school placement practice, which was a major consideration for the already overstretched schools. In a report for the Principal's Panel, Dawson declared that 'the position remains grave in the extreme; and the necessity still remains to find 2,000 extra teachers each year in the immediate future if the introduction of the Three Year Course is to be safeguarded.'⁶⁵ Such safeguarding was crucial to the process of equality of provision across the teacher training establishments, and a further step towards the granting of degrees, so desired by Dawson and her peers.

At Newton Park itself, each stage of growth brought associated pressure on teaching and living accommodation; extra buildings were needed and hostel provision was desperately short. These constant developments are evidenced in the landscape at Newton Park today, and the buildings reveal adaptation and additions from every decade from the 1940s to the present. As Dawson told her former students in 1958:

The strong possibility is that Newton Park will take part in much larger expansion. The plan would necessitate considerable building – Student's Union buildings, a library twice the size of the present one, an additional gymnasium, a drama centre with space for acting, mime and movement, storage, a cafeteria for day students and additional lecture rooms.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ House of Commons Debate 6th June 1957, available from <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1957/jun/06/teachers-training-course> [Accessed 23.6.18].

⁶⁵ Mary Dawson, *Report for the Principal's Panel of the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education*, 1958.

⁶⁶ Mary Dawson, *Principal's Letter*, Newton Park College Facet Magazine, 1966.

The Chair of the Principals' Panel was just one of the roles Dawson carried out within the ATCDE. She was, during the late 1950s and until her retirement in 1968, extremely active in the Association in many of the various campaigns for greater recognition of the teacher training profession. She continued her work on the Clearing House Committee, as well as advising on the Association's *Handbook for Teacher Training*, and committees looking into the Government of Training Colleges. This, and the Universities and Training Colleges Committee looked at ensuring moves towards fuller recognition of the colleges within higher education as a whole. She was part of the Working Party on Principals' Salaries, a development of the Pelham Scale which had been negotiated by the ATCDE in 1944/5 in its role as a trade union.⁶⁷ From 1961 until 1967, Dawson advised on Educational Policy, Teaching and Learning Methods and notably, was chair of the Working Party to prepare evidence to the Plowden Committee, from 1964 – 1967.⁶⁸ The Plowden Report (1967) *Children and their Primary Schools* endorsed the kind of child-centred progressive education which Dawson and her peers had been advocating since the interwar period, and which had featured in the Hadow reports of that era.⁶⁹ It also addressed the effects that examinations such as the 11+ had on the primary schools and reminded the nation that many of the neglected school premises identified in previous legislation were still in existence.⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that 'Progressive' education is still widely associated with the Plowden Report despite many of its ideas and theories being the stuff of Dawson's entire career.⁷¹ Published a year before her retirement, the report must have seemed, in many ways, a culmination of her efforts, and she is mentioned as a contributor of evidence, in her own right as well as in her official capacity within the ATCDE.⁷²

Throughout the 1960s, Dawson was well-placed to observe and enact many of the changes affecting the colleges. At Newton Park, growth and development also included becoming a mixed college. Although the Rural Science course had included men from the mid-1950s, they were fully integrated into the student body

⁶⁷ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.29.

⁶⁸ List of Committee Members 1946 – 67, (MSS.176/CD/D/1/45).

⁶⁹ Aldrich, *History of Education*, p.86.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.87.

⁷¹ Spencer *et al*, *Alumni Voices*, p.156,157.

⁷² Browne p.193; <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/plowden/plowden1967-1.html> p. 505, p.512.

at Newton Park College in 1960, a major alteration which was welcomed by Dawson as a natural response to the requirement for growth and progress. At that point, a new community dynamic emerged. Although prepared to embrace the changes that men brought to the College, she was surprised by some which actually occurred. Dawson was drawn to comment about the ways she observed the ideas of community and responsibility that she had espoused for so long being reframed and challenged. The feeling of joint endeavour and the supportive, caring nature of the women's college was called into question, and by the early 1960s, seen as rather old-fashioned. 'Care' was seen as authoritarian, 'support' as regimentation, and the community as a female environment which needed shaking up.⁷³ She described the advent of men in the College as 'a big change, and difficult at first, but I like having them very much now'.⁷⁴ In welcoming the male students, Dawson anticipated the advent of the 'balanced community' that she had once sought in the employment of male staff. There were some difficulties associated with the new students, which she described:

It was difficult at first for this reason – they had to prove themselves, justify themselves, and it was almost essential for them to imagine that we had been a kind of girls boarding school before they came and that they must 'liberate' us. In actual fact they'd [women students before 1960] had a lot of freedom because I'd always believed in freedom for students. It was necessary for the men to believe that we hadn't been free and to start a new constitution and to work themselves out.⁷⁵

The male students, as a one-third minority in a majority female environment, asserted themselves loudly, and in particular through Students' Union activities. The female students, previously in charge in the Union structure, began to stand aside as male students made themselves heard. As an experienced leader with a lifelong interest in psychology, Dawson, in stating that this 'was necessary for them' seems to show that she understood the 'proving themselves' to be a temporary phase which would quickly pass. She recognised that the men needed to find a new path in order to integrate effectively. They were, she said, 'vigorous and vocal' in the beginning, and she seems to have allowed this attitude in order to hasten integration. The following shows that she was more concerned with the

⁷³ John, male student, 1964-67. Oral testimony.

⁷⁴ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

women students' response, and describing their actions at a school prize-giving event, she said that her women students:

...have amazed me. It is obvious to everyone looking on that the community is the poorer for their abdication of responsibility. It is a surprising *volte-face* that would have astounded those ladies who tied themselves to the railings of the House of Commons and fought so hard in the early years of the century to give women equal rights and responsibilities with men. It would be disastrous if women abdicated their responsibilities and left the running of affairs entirely to men. Does the younger generation want to accept the former and shirk the latter? Do they accept the privileges and avoid the duties? I could develop this theme at great length.⁷⁶

Dawson was most concerned that the women students were forgetting the responsibilities of citizenship, upon which she had based her own and her College's philosophy. But in delivering this speech to a cohort of secondary school girls, Dawson is perhaps delivering a rallying cry to the next generation. Education had empowered her, and empowered her students, but once the College became mixed, a different dynamic emerged. What Dawson had built for women was not robust enough to survive beyond her own era; whereas she herself had won the respect of her peers and her own domain, any lasting change would be submersed in the greater changes brought about by those very developments she had welcomed.

The change to a mixed college coincided with the period in which young people's autonomy in general was under discussion. This would eventually lead to the lowering of the age of majority from twenty-one to eighteen. For residential students in particular, the College's rules of care and responsibility *in loco parentis* which still existed for the eighteen, nineteen- and twenty-year olds still considered 'minors', were under review. In the meantime, male students in particular interpreted the existing rules of care negatively. Dawson, as Principal, was held to be responsible for a series of petty regulations, whereas in reality, she was involved, along with other college principals, in external discussions for change in this area. Male students recalled:

⁷⁶ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

I don't know but...it may have occurred at Newton Park at one time where, um, girls didn't argue...but I think when the men came along it, it changed completely for the better I believe.⁷⁷

The history as you know was, oh lots of female students here, and very few, very few men and I think when a number of men got themselves onto the Student Union we began to push the principal and some of the powers that be, to give us a little bit, a bit, a bit more of a university-type union situation...Yeah, I think things were changing too rapidly...for her to be happy with.⁷⁸

Within two years of the arrival of male students there was an overhaul of 'the internal structure in terms of the Students' Union constitution [giving] students almost complete autonomy in their union affairs.'⁷⁹ From the very beginning of its life, the College had been in a continual state of development and change, so the comments about an inability to handle such change are interesting. Perhaps it was a deeper clash, since the presence of men seems to have brought gender comparisons to the fore. During an interview towards the end of her career, whilst acknowledging her own generalisation, Dawson made this observation:

Women work harder than men because they are more conscientious and they want to please their tutors more than men do. Men want to see what they are going to get out of it. I think men are very realistic. The men want to see what they will get out of it. If they thought it was worth working for then they worked or if they were interested then they worked. But they don't work because they are naturally conscientious.⁸⁰

Dawson was a pragmatist, but also, in her own estimation, an idealist. She had spent most of her career promoting the agency of women, through her own actions and through the establishment of the Newton Park community. Having worked so hard in the cause of equality, she was wary of any hint that her own College might be identified with the narrow women's colleges of old. During her 1967 interview, the male interviewers turned to the subject of the male students' contribution to life at Newton Park since their arrival seven years before. One interviewer asks "Is the College more successful now?" To which Dawson sharply responds: "What do you

⁷⁷ Tom, male student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p. 16.

⁸⁰ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

mean by 'successful'?"⁸¹ causing the interviewer to stumble on his words and backtrack hastily.

The male view was not entirely negative about a perceived female environment, however. One male student remembers that:

It was fantastic for me, I was very lucky to get in here...It never felt....as if you were in a female dominated society....never, there was nothing...to suggest that the majority of people here were female.⁸²

Others reflect on the closeness of the community, and that 'It felt like you knew everybody'; 'Yes, everybody knew everybody'.⁸³

This pattern does however, accord with changes seen throughout society and the trajectory towards the lowering of the age of majority. During Dawson's years at Newton Park, significant attention focussed on responsibility of, and for, the young person. Carol Dyhouse cites the 'longstanding student protests over 'paternalism' which occurred at the time.⁸⁴ From the end of the Second World War until the late 1960s, ideas surrounding propriety and behaviour underwent substantial modification and Dyhouse states that in higher education as a whole, 'girls were seen as needing special supervision and disciplinary arrangements.'⁸⁵ Dawson had described the first student cohort as 'glad to be alive and grateful for anything'; a situation which obviously required a sensitive handling of change as the College developed. But the first task had always been to build the reputation of a new College, and in such a situation, guidelines of conduct were not uncommon.

During this time Dawson, as a college principal, also contributed to wider discussions about the relaxation of rules of behaviour which took place in higher education leadership circles, discussions in which she takes a pro-freedom, pro-student view. Back at Newton Park, her observations of day-to-day life also show her to be liberal in outlook; behind the scenes Dawson always supported her students. In a small community of people, she knew her students and had, she said, 'faith in the younger generation'. She helped and advised those who faced personal difficulties, and defended young people and their choices. Eventually,

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Joseph, male student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

⁸³ Anne, female student, 1965-68. Oral testimony.

⁸⁴ Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, p.163.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

examples of 'moral tutelage' so typical of the early period of the College, faded away in the push towards the change in the age of majority. Contrary to many assumptions, the rules of 'moral tutelage' are perhaps more indicative of the period's values in society as a whole than any specific behavioural limitations associated solely with the women's colleges.⁸⁶ Certainly the individuals Dawson advised could attest to her liberal attitude, which was described as that of 'any sensible parent'.⁸⁷ The ongoing discussion surrounding a college's duty of care versus students' personal autonomy would continue until the issues were resolved by the passing of the Representation of the People Act, 1969, which lowered the age of majority to eighteen.

All of these changes were part of the wider transition which the training colleges were making towards parity with universities. The first of these was progress from a two to a three year course, which had been an aim of the ATCDE and its predecessor the TCA since the interwar period,⁸⁸ as well as a recommendation of previous reports and educational legislation up to McNair:

A two-year course is not sufficient for students entering upon training at 18 years of age. The studies and activities required of them and the claims of school practice are such that their day is overcrowded...with little time for necessary reflection...many students in training colleges do not mature by living: they survive by hurrying.⁸⁹

Mary Dawson's own enthusiasm for a three-year course had been rooted in her philosophy of holistic learning, since the extra time could be spent, not on extra content, but in developing the individual and their depth of understanding. Browne asserts that, having achieved agreement on the longer course by the late 1950s, 'the ATCDE directed its attentions to the next goal – that of greater recognition in the field of higher education as a whole, and the Bachelor of Education degree.'⁹⁰ Dawson was confident that the teachers she was training already displayed the range of skills required, and wrote:

⁸⁶ Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, p.173.

⁸⁷ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

⁸⁸ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.94.

⁸⁹ The McNair Report (1944) Teachers and Youth Leaders, Report of the Committee appointed by the President of the Board of Education to consider the Supply, Recruitment and Training of Teachers and Youth Leaders, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office 1944, Available at <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/mcnair/mcnair1944.html> (Accessed 13.5.15) p.65.

⁹⁰ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.107.

The skilled teacher has frequent opportunities for utilising a penetrating intellect and our schools would be well served by more entrants with highly trained minds capable of reviewing their work with vision and foresight, with a critical appreciation of the fundamental purpose of education and their subject.⁹¹

In 1959, the Crowther Report, into the educational provision for fifteen to eighteen year olds, was published. It noted that the number of pupils qualifying for university was increasing faster than available places.⁹² As a result of the 1944 Education Act and free secondary education, the number of pupils staying on past the school leaving age had doubled. This led to the appointment of the Robbins committee, whose brief was 'to review the pattern of full-time higher education...[and] its long-term development'.⁹³ For those ambitious members of the training college world, a crucial opportunity was presented by the further question for the committee 'whether any new types of institution are desirable and whether any modifications should be made in the present arrangements for planning and co-ordinating the development of the various types of institution'.⁹⁴ Gillard describes the scores of meetings held and the hundreds of submissions of evidence received as the Robbins committee sought their information.

Robbins supplied the official recognition that the training colleges were providing higher education for a generation whilst answering the clamouring calls for more teachers, and the oral history subjects featured in this thesis recalled their own experiences of this:

If you stayed on into sixth form and did A-level then you were offered nursing, civil service, university or training college.⁹⁵

In those days women didn't have much choice; you could be a teacher, you could be a nurse, you could be a secretary or you could be a shop girl and that was more or less all you could be. A few people were air hostesses

⁹¹ Mary Dawson, *The Framework of the B Ed degree: General Considerations* (undated).

⁹² *The Crowther Report: 15 to 18*, (London, HMSO, 1959) available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/crowther/crowther1959-1.html> [Accessed 12.6.18]. paragraph 287.

⁹³ *The Robbins Report: Higher Education*, (London: HMSO, 1963), available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins1963.html> [Accessed 10.4.17].

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

and a few were one or two other things but essentially there wasn't much choice.⁹⁶

In those days it was hard for girls to do anything very much other than secretarial work, nursing or factory work but my parents were very encouraging and I did stay on at school to do A-Levels which was fairly unusual...but there was no thought of going to university...wasn't ever thought of for me to do that.⁹⁷

The constant drive to increase numbers, accounts for the focus on teaching as a career which these students felt, and statements alluding to limitation of choice for post-sixth form girls throughout the long 1950s feature in around one third of the oral history interviews. The promotion of these jobs was as the direct result of national need, and indeed several women mention the choice between just two careers of either nursing or teaching. In the long 1950s, the twin social revolutions in health and education meant that young women received strong messages of persuasion to join one of these professions, through media attention, careers advice and societal expectation. In terms of teaching, Klein's research asserted that:

About two-thirds of all women with higher qualifications...head for the teaching profession...the urgent need for more school teachers is general knowledge, brought home to the public through direct experience or widespread publicity...The resulting climate of opinion exerts a gentle moral pressure on school-leavers with the requisite abilities to enter the teaching profession. Hand-in-hand with this, of course, goes the realisation that teaching offers a wide-open field of opportunities for employment.⁹⁸

It is also likely that the young women's own schoolteachers, as the older generation of professional women who had experienced first-hand the benefits and independence of such a career, were in a favourable position to recommend the profession of teaching to their pupils. They were among the determined women for whom 'an honourable independence [was] both a modest and a revolutionary achievement.'⁹⁹ Teaching had provided these women with a strong sense of agency, so it is perhaps unsurprising that they would recommend it as a choice for their own students, especially since the role had become even more

⁹⁶ Wendy, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

⁹⁷ Ann, female student, 1951-53. Oral testimony.

⁹⁸ Klein, 'Professional Womanpower', p.184.

⁹⁹ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women*, (London: Virago, 1985) p.162.

attractive in the post-marriage-bar era. Dawson herself frequently reiterated the positive advantages that this change had wrought for the profession in general.

Dyhouse's study of university women in this period, states that 'teaching...be it a vocation, the only realistic option or a last resort, remained the fate of the majority of women graduates in the period.'¹⁰⁰ At a time when university was an opportunity for a few, teacher training colleges served as a higher education destination for many others. The oral testimonies of Newton Park women suggest a split between the vocational choice and the default choice recommended to students at the time, showing that the training colleges served as a realistic alternative to university for students seeking greater opportunity. The Robbins Report of 1963 recognised that these college settings had served to increase capacity in the higher educational world for the post-war generation, and it was this capacity which would be an important factor in the much greater expansion of higher education which followed in the wake of that report. Holloway states that whereas 'the number of university students doubled between 1938 and 1960, there was a fourfold increase in those attending training colleges.'¹⁰¹ The teacher training colleges therefore provided higher education for those who had not ever considered such a choice in the past, and served as a conduit to wider opportunities for many, thereby increasing levels of confidence for the colleges and their students in yet another way. Oral testimony confirms the idea of training college as an alternative route:

Traditions at school were that you went on to some kind of further education but the percentage of girls who went to university was quite low. We were all A-Level students, we'd all got what would now be classed as university qualifications...but university wasn't an option. That was a very narrow option for a few people...so I think an awful lot of us went in to teacher training college who hadn't thought we wanted to be teachers.¹⁰²

I came from an ordinary working class family, would love to have gone to university but in those days you didn't even think about it you know if you didn't have that kind of income you didn't do it and that was simple, but I think my headmistress, who was absolutely brilliant, one of the world's best headmistresses, Rachel Pearce, she said "No, she will make a good teacher, go for a training college" which was even something for my parents – that was quite a big thing – but that's why I came to Newton Park.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Dyhouse, *Students*, p.51.

¹⁰¹ Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.169.

¹⁰² Shirley, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁰³ Anna, female student, 1949-51. Oral testimony.

I came from a very ordinary working-class background. My mother was ambitious for me. My father ... wasn't, but very supportive just the same.¹⁰⁴

Teacher training colleges were therefore a more easily accessible form of higher education to those unlikely or unwilling to apply to the universities, with many girls opting for this route. With the virtual guarantee of a teaching post to follow, it was also a more practical choice for those from modest backgrounds.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Byrne states that:

Teaching has in fact traditionally attracted girls of proportionately higher academic ability than the equivalent male entrants to colleges of education...it is reasonable to hypothesize from the figures that the average woman teacher student was more able than the average male teacher student.¹⁰⁶

Former women students at Newton Park College concur with this statement; they were often aware of being, in their own words, 'better' students, and were confident in their abilities as a result.¹⁰⁷ Overall, during this period, many women were led, by their school and college experience, to a realisation of their own capacity within higher education.

Thus teaching empowered a broader range of young people to enter higher education, paving the way for greater participation as a whole.¹⁰⁸ The training colleges were an important factor in the growth of the sector since they were, as stated, the higher education destination for many more people than the small number who attended university during this period.

The massive expansion in higher education in later decades would stem in large part from the teacher training provision which already existed. Dyhouse concurs that the period saw the growth of 'the social expectation that girls had as much claim to higher education as boys' – an expectation which came to be taken for granted.¹⁰⁹ In numerical terms, higher education was experienced by only 2% of

¹⁰⁴ Jo, female student, 1954-56. Oral testimony.

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001). Carol Dyhouse, 'Family patterns of social mobility through higher education in England in the 1930s' *Journal of Social History*, 34.4 (2001) 817 – 842. Carol Dyhouse, 'Going to university between the wars: access and funding' *History of Education* 31.1 (2002) 1 – 14.

¹⁰⁶ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p.212.

¹⁰⁷ Helen, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony. Naomi, female student, 1962-65. Oral testimony.

¹⁰⁸ Dyhouse, *Students*, p.97.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.58.

the population before the Second World War; in 1939 there were 50,000 students attending thirty institutions. By the end of the twentieth century, this figure had risen to 1.5 million students in 165 institutions. This huge rise was supported in part by the existence of teacher training colleges like Newton Park.¹¹⁰ Today, the figure has risen to 2.3 million students in higher education.¹¹¹ Dyhouse stresses that 'if higher education has spread like an infectious disease in the twentieth century, then women have acted as important carriers.'¹¹² In its final report, the Robbins committee confirmed that two-thirds of current training college students were women.¹¹³

Dawson was enthusiastic about the work of the Robbins committee. She had eagerly anticipated the publication of the report, describing it in advance as 'radical thinking...about the place they [training colleges, universities and colleges of advanced technology] should occupy in the modern world.'¹¹⁴ Jeong stresses that despite much enthusiasm for the recognition that enhancement of higher education as a whole would bring to the training colleges, as a body they were not represented on the Robbins committee.¹¹⁵ Individuals like Mary Dawson were left to influence matters through other means, through the ATCDE, the Institutes of Education and through professional connections. Jeong further asserts that the Robbins committee 'thought that the links between training colleges and universities was not as beneficial to the colleges as might have been hoped.'¹¹⁶ It was noted in the report that the training colleges felt themselves to be 'only doubtfully recognised as part of the system of higher education'¹¹⁷ However this was not the case as far as Dawson and Newton Park College were concerned, having always enjoyed productive relations with the Bristol University Institute. Eagerly anticipating the findings of the Robbins Report, Dawson described it as 'likely to be the most important educational report of this century.'¹¹⁸ A thankyou

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.ix.

¹¹¹ Universities UK, Higher Education in Facts and Figures, available from <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Pages/facts-and-figures-2016.aspx> [Accessed on 1.4.17].

¹¹² Carol Dyhouse, 'Graduates, mothers and graduate mothers: family investment in higher education in twentieth century England', *Gender & Education* 14.4 (2002) 325 – 336, pp.334, 335. R Layard, J King, C Moser, *The Impact of Robbins*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1969) pp.16, 17.

¹¹³ Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, p.286.

¹¹⁴ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

¹¹⁵ Jeong, *Teacher Policy*, p.77.

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, p.289 cites Robbins, paragraph 308.

¹¹⁸ Mary Dawson, Speech, Devonport High School for Girls, 18th October 1963.

letter from Anthony Part from the Ministry of Education, eighteen months before the publication of the Robbins report indicates the interest Dawson took in the latest educational developments, as well as her enthusiasm for change and her continuing ambitions for the training of teachers. After meeting with the principal at Newton Park College, Part wrote 'Thank you for letting me talk with you about the Robbins Committee and the Dawson Plan!'¹¹⁹ It is not known what 'the Dawson Plan' entailed, but her advocacy of degrees for teachers was well known. She wrote:

The case [for the degree] is overwhelming. There are in the colleges numbers of able people quite capable of good degree work but prevented by lack of opportunity. At eighteen, they proceeded to college rather than University for a variety of reasons, to the wrong courses, or because of a special interest in teaching or in an unorthodox subject such as Rural Science....But there is a manifest injustice in a system which is weighted so heavily against them as compared with the university student. From the professional point of view, there is an urgent need to bring into schools teachers with an advanced knowledge of education, psychology and philosophy. Recent developments in our understanding of children's learning have made it clear that there is a great deal of basic re-thinking to be done, and numbers of teachers need to be involved in research. In the years to come, teachers with a four year training behind them would be able to play a vigorous part in such investigations. Furthermore, although many of us think it deplorable, so strong is the public esteem for a degree, that until there are more graduates in the Primary School, it will continue to be an undervalued part of the profession.¹²⁰

She also stated:

The possession of such a degree must therefore testify not only to the students' academic proficiency but to the fact that they have related this knowledge to themselves both as a person and as a teacher. They must, in other words, have considered in some depth what contribution the subjects make to the needs of children through their own awareness of the enrichment they have brought to themselves.¹²¹

The Robbins report, published in October 1963, echoed much of Dawson's own philosophy about holistic learning in its scope. It stated that the best higher education institutions should have four main objectives:

¹¹⁹ Letter, Anthony Part to Mary Dawson, 19th February 1962, Mary Dawson Collection.

¹²⁰ Mary Dawson, *Principal's letter*, Facet, OSA Magazine, 1965.

¹²¹ Mary Dawson, *The Framework of the B Ed degree: General Considerations* (undated).

essential to any properly balanced system: instruction in skills; the promotion of the general powers of the mind so as to produce not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women; to maintain research in balance with teaching, since teaching should not be separated from the advancement of learning and the search for truth; and to transmit a common culture and common standards of citizenship.¹²²

Browne notes that the ATCDE had also pointed out that ‘colleges were already concerned with the education of students as persons as well as teachers.’¹²³ In preparing its evidence for the Robbins committee, Dawson and the ATCDE had highlighted the advantages that college students enjoyed ‘not only the academic subjects taken in universities but [also] aesthetic and practical skills.’¹²⁴ At Newton Park this included focus on the environmental amenities, extensive arts and crafts, rural sciences and a rich background of music and musical education.

Furthermore, the report stated that places at higher education settings ‘should be available to all who were qualified for them by ability and attainment’ and stressed the need to provide equal opportunities.¹²⁵ All of these considerations had been part of the Newton Park College philosophy from the beginning, as well as many of the other colleges represented by the ATCDE. Finally, Robbins proposed that, in making the higher education settings more equal, the degree of Bachelor of Education should be available in the training colleges. Browne asserts that the ATCDE ‘was frankly jubilant about these recommendations, which embodied their own views so completely, and immediately set about making them a reality.’¹²⁶

As part of the ongoing development of her College, Dawson fervently promoted the move towards degree-bearing courses, along with many in the teacher training colleges who recognised the ‘momentous’ change this would bring.¹²⁷ This change meant recognition of the colleges as an intrinsic part of higher education and the expansion which followed. According to Brown *et al*, Robbins meant ‘not just the expansion of British higher education, but its democratisation.’¹²⁸ For Dawson, her

¹²² The Robbins Report (1963) London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1963, available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins1963.html> [Accessed 10.4.17].

¹²³ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.100.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Robbins Report, paragraph 31, available from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins1963.html>

¹²⁶ Browne, *Teachers of Teachers*, p.117.

¹²⁷ Jeong, *Teacher Policy in England*, p.24.

¹²⁸ Brown *et al*, p.231.

work at Newton Park led to this – proof that the college she had overseen could represent all the advantages that education had brought to her.

Colleges like Newton Park played a crucial role within the evolution and growth of higher education, and responded to change wherever it occurred. However, this willingness to change and adapt, along with the greater contribution the College made to the post-war educational revolution, were forgotten amidst the increasing speed of change in the following decades.

As a result of the developments that she herself had encouraged throughout her principalship, the period described as the ‘fragile hegemony’ of women’s colleges, led by women like herself, came to an end.¹²⁹ Byrne’s study demonstrates that 1965 was the high watermark in women’s leadership in education; a level of female leadership and influence which then rapidly declined.¹³⁰

Mary Dawson’s principalship at Newton Park College was one example of many, of strong female leadership which ceased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Her peers were all approaching retirement in the same period, and as similar conditions for the advancement of a new generation of women had not prevailed, there was consequently a shortage of natural successors in the numbers required. Dyhouse asserts that although the era of the women’s training college was over, its ‘transitory existence’ was an important part of ‘the wider feminist struggle to provide women with an adequate education.’¹³¹ The women’s colleges had provided Dawson’s generation with important roles in educational leadership – Heward states that ‘from 1910 to 1960 women were dominant, their authority legitimated by academic qualifications, the prevalence of sex-segregated institutions and the Board of Education regulations.’¹³² These were the regulations which insisted that female education, whether of girls in schools or of trainee teachers in colleges, should be led and conducted by women. Heward emphasises that this ‘singular and unknown instance of discrimination was highly effective until 1960.’¹³³

But these conditions were eroding. More choice for women in terms of careers meant fewer of the highly educated women in the educational field than had been

¹²⁹ Edwards, *Women*, *passim*.

¹³⁰ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p.212.

¹³¹ Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, p.170.

¹³² Heward, ‘Men and Women’, p.12.

¹³³ Heward, ‘Women and Careers’, p.13.

the case in former decades. The great shift from single-sex to mixed colleges combined with the growth of those colleges changed the role of principal into one of administrator. Barbara Thompson demonstrates that this 'adversely affected the career prospects of women teacher educators' managerial and leadership roles and precipitated a gradual shift in the balance of power between men and women managing in teacher training.'¹³⁴ Heward further asserts that this led to 'the eclipse of women's authority from positions in which they distinguished themselves for over half a century. Women held positions of power in teacher education with distinction...they managed large organisations successfully...they were also influential in government policy.'¹³⁵

The revolution Mary Dawson had overseen was limited to her own years of leadership. Once she had retired, the principalship passed to a man, and the discourse of amalgamation took centre stage. It is Heward's assertion that 'the academic profession became more differentiated and hierarchical as management became an increasingly separate function.'¹³⁶ The move towards amalgamation and further growth, so welcomed by many of the forward-looking principals, relegated the teacher training colleges to the past. Agency and citizenship took on new meanings in the late 1960s and 1970s from those of the long 1950s, amidst the changing economic climate and more vocal political engagement. Furthermore, the student body had grown beyond the scope of the tightly-knit community which Dawson had cultivated so carefully.

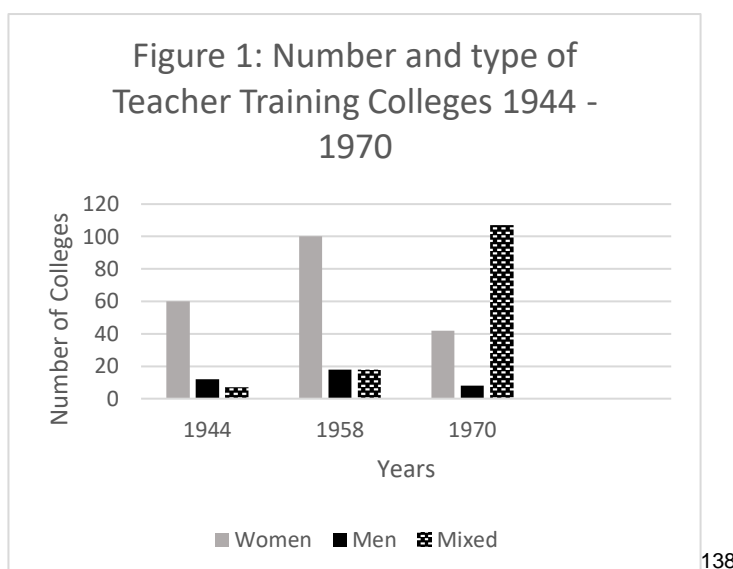
These developments are highlighted in the graph below (Figure 1) which shows the change in the numbers and types of teacher training colleges through the years of Dawson's leadership and the period of women's hegemony. In terms of college principals, in 1944 there were sixty women and just nine men in the role. This was proportionately higher in 1958, but by 1970, when the mixed college was firmly established as the new model of training colleges, almost all those women principals had retired. By 1980, only five women remained.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Barbara Thompson, 'Working beyond the glass ceiling: women managers in initial teacher training in England', *Gender and Education*, 19.3 (2007) 339-352, p.340.

¹³⁵ Heward, 'Professional Society', p.32.

¹³⁶ Heward, *Women and Careers*, p.11.

¹³⁷ Heward, *Professional Society*, p.26.



Ironically, the changes which led to the demise of women's dominance in the training college world had been welcomed by forward-looking principals like Mary Dawson. She had promoted development, and welcomed growth. Furthermore, from the beginning she had sought a 'balanced community' which included male members of staff, and had been including male students on the Rural Science courses since the mid-1950s. In other colleges this had happened at a later date; Heward asserts that male staff only began to appear in the women's teacher training colleges by the 1960s and early 1970s.¹³⁹

The interwar generation of inspiring and influential women educators had reached retirement age, and changes in attitudes in the late 1960s and 1970s led to a representation of women's colleges as old-fashioned, a move which echoed the criticisms of the McNair Report over twenty years earlier. Their image was stigmatised in these terms, rather than being remembered as the progressive establishments they had actually been. The contribution they had made towards education as a whole, the reputation of teaching as a profession, and the expansion of higher education itself was quickly forgotten.¹⁴⁰ The next phase of college development was amalgamation, to create larger institutions which could withstand the economic pressures of the 1970s whilst responding to the demands of a different era of higher education, as well as changes in the schools. Women educators had always been at the forefront of change. The women teachers of Mary Dawson's era had influenced the educational world in a number of important

¹³⁸ Figures cited by Heward, *Professional Society*, p.22, 23.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 26.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

ways. Their experience, ideas and philosophies had established and grown the colleges; their liberalism made them likely to adopt progressive attitudes and to anticipate developments in their field. For example, many teacher training colleges were at the forefront of movement towards co-education while universities were still struggling with the concept. Their relative newness made such a change far more straightforward and they pushed the agenda of equality and democratisation, being free to adapt and change as required.¹⁴¹

Dawson had played her part in the educational revolution; she had grasped her 'opportune moment' and brought the College successfully through several periods of major change. Edwards' assertion that 'the death knell of the women's training colleges and their culture' had been caused by the McNair Report fails to recognise the role that colleges like Newton Park played in the broader positive growth of higher education and the level of agency enjoyed by the women these colleges trained for over twenty years after the Report was published.¹⁴²

Furthermore, in stating that 'the whole training college culture was old-fashioned, inward looking and out of touch with the realities of the post-war world', Edwards neglects the influence exerted by such institutions in that period.¹⁴³ Colleges with forward-looking, development-oriented mentalities had indeed embraced the challenges and changes which took place, as this thesis has shown.

Dawson was proud of the role she had been given as Principal of Newton Park, and of the work she achieved. On her retirement in 1968, she left the College in a healthy position and with a forward-looking community spirit and attitude. During her twenty-two years of leadership, Newton Park had responded to all the challenges which had taken place. Reflecting on those years, she said:

To read the McNair report in 1968 is to read history. [Almost] all recommendations have now been adopted in the spirit as well as the letter. In addition, within less than four years the Robbins Committee recommendations on the B.Ed. degrees has become a reality. Are there any other institutions that have adapted themselves to such profound and rapid changes in so short a period?¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Dyhouse, *Students* p.120.

¹⁴² Edwards, *Women*, p.170.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.19.

Dawson took pleasure in her part in these reforming educational changes, the increased level of prestige for the profession, as well as in the fact that her old students were scattered all over the country and all over the world:

I am really fond of my old students, I love to see them grow when they come back...they are mostly women and I find they have grown into rather fine people. It gives me enormous pleasure. I am terribly proud of them. They are probably quite unaware of it, but I am...I think this real satisfaction comes in teaching – seeing what becomes of some of your students, what kind of people they become.¹⁴⁵

Mary Dawson, and women like her, had throughout their careers successfully negotiated a range of opinions and judgements of their personal ambition, professionalism, authoritative positions and single status, at a time when each of these things, for a woman, were considered contentious and difficult. Dawson remained an advocate of women's contribution to education and spoke eloquently about her peers and the women who had influenced her throughout her life. She promoted the need for equality in the teaching profession, combined with the recognition of an individual's ability to influence their community through their work as teachers. Having grown up in the first half of the twentieth century, and witnessed the many changes in status for women, she knew it was important that women should take a full part in the life of their communities, proving their value as citizens wherever they found themselves. In 1928, when Dawson was amongst the first young women finally granted the right to vote, there was much press coverage about 'Votes for Flappers'. Young women were labelled as irresponsible, and accused of lacking in knowledge about the responsibilities of the citizenship they could now explore. Inevitably this must have focussed the attention of the women themselves, challenging them to prove their worth in terms of the rights and therefore the duties of citizenship.¹⁴⁶ Dawson promoted the potential for each individual and the possibilities before them. She encouraged a diverse range of young people to aspire to higher education, and took pains to present the possibilities it could provide. She considered her own life and career to have been 'tremendously satisfying – more satisfying than anything the feeling that I've given.'¹⁴⁷ The College was the culmination of her life's work, a source of pride, and the all-consuming focus of her ambition. By the time Mary Dawson retired in 1968

¹⁴⁵ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

¹⁴⁶ Pugh, *Women*, p.77.

¹⁴⁷ Browne & Moon, Interview with Mary Dawson.

she had overseen the expansion from forty-five women students struggling to find a home, to several hundred young people embracing the new Batchelor of Education degree with plans for expansion to include a 60% increase in student numbers. She had been an active member of external networks of professionals, and influential in national educational circles through her work with the ATCDE. At the end of her career she was still looking ahead:

So many of us are bowing ourselves off the stage of Newton Park...I into retirement, you into a world of children, challenges and opportunities...someone told me the other day that I was approaching the happiest time of my life...and yet I envy you. I wish I were beginning all over again to continue the fight to keep humanity in education...and to prevent it becoming academically sterile: for this I believe is the great educational issue of this century, and will become more so in the computerised age of the future.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Mary Dawson, Speech, Retirement Dinner, 11th June 1968.

Conclusion

Miss Dawson was a very good Principal...She thought of her students and she knew the difficulties of existing as a student with very little money because she'd been through that experience at university... she had a vision which she stuck to that she would have this College, she had a vision I think that very few people have, of an aim; to produce a College of Education of a very high standard...and she did it.¹

The rediscovery of Mary Dawson's portrait in 2011 called into question the ways that the institution she helped to found had remembered, or failed to remember, her contribution. This thesis redresses that oversight, bringing Mary Dawson and her women students back into view for the contribution they made to the field of education, a field which was radically altered during this period by their presence. Without the expanding teacher training colleges and the courses they delivered, the later expansion of higher education as a whole could not have taken place.

This thesis has explored the origins of Newton Park Training College, its principal Mary Dawson and the experience of the students it trained. It has established the important part played by colleges such as Newton Park in the development of women's education and professional training. In the period of Dawson's leadership, the College had not only fulfilled its initial requirement to answer the demands of the 1944 Education Act, but had adapted and grown steadily. It had begun with the original forty-five students, and by the late 1960s several hundred students trained each year. But beyond that it had also embraced the challenge of the McNair Report and refuted its findings in multiple ways. As well as increasing capacity to answer demand, the College had also ensured that it was part of national educational development, taking part in the research and enquiry which led to new and longer courses. There was greater recognition of the role of the teacher and their training, which, in Dawson's words, had 'raised [their] status, responsibility and autonomy.'² This recognition resulted in the planned shift towards the awarding of degrees for which Dawson and her colleagues within the ATCDE had campaigned, for so long. In the process, and because of Mary Dawson's own ambitions and approach, the College established a commitment and desire for growth which led ultimately to the development of a fully-fledged

¹ Christina, female student, 1947-49. Oral testimony.

² Dawson, *Twenty-two years*, p.2

university. In this respect, it shares a similar story to many other UK teacher training colleges which formed an important part of the wider expansion of higher education in the wake of the Robbins Report and beyond. There is further work to be done in this area, to move beyond individual case studies and institutional histories, to reveal the overall significance of the women's colleges and professional associations, their role in expanding women's opportunities and their place in the broadening of higher education as a whole.

As an example of the expression of citizenship in practice, and a place from which women could demonstrate agency, Newton Park College represents an important case study. By physically transforming a country house setting from a private to a public space, generations of students were enabled to put the rhetoric of the post-war period into practice. Furthermore, the teachers featured in this thesis demonstrated responsible citizenship throughout long and productive careers, at a time when their involvement was valued, sought after and needed. Mary Dawson's women became part of a more important movement of women, who by becoming teachers and agents of change, were given the opportunity 'to fully realise their humanity' and lead the full and abundant lives so encouraged by their Principal.³ They were not observers in a quiet period for feminism, but by 'enjoying freer lives with wider opportunities,'⁴ they were part of the 'slow-moving structural change' for women in this period. They responded to Dawson's vision of a woman's right to the abundant life, took practical advantage of the opportunities before them, and were visible on the public stage; in this respect they served as the role models to the younger generation, which the McNair Report had envisaged in 1944.⁵

As a Principal, Mary Dawson was also personally successful in grasping her 'opportune moment', building a College which was, for a while, so closely identified with her, and providing other women with training in a profession in which she herself had flourished. The 'fragile hegemony' described by Edwards was not ended by the McNair report in 1944 as she suggests. Instead, the women's colleges in the post-McNair period rose to the challenge it set; ironically, they ceased to exist not through failure or an unwillingness to change, but because of their own success in adapting to that change. In the years following Mary

³ Bennett, *Feminism*, p.8.

⁴ Beaumont, *Housewives*, p.7

⁵ *Ibid*, p.61.

Dawson's retirement, there followed a period in which many of these achievements were overlooked, underestimated or superseded. By the 1970s, the choice of teaching as a woman's career was viewed as conforming to gender expectation rather than presenting the opportunity which an earlier generation had embraced. In addition, the role of mother-at-home was no longer viewed as a valid expression of citizenship; split careers and part-time work were criticised as regressive, and roles like teaching no longer regarded as empowering.⁶ The part-time teaching which had been heavily promoted as a positive way for a generation of women to retain a strong presence in the workplace, was instead highlighted as hampering career progression for women, whilst their male colleagues continued to enjoy the majority of senior roles. This change of perception stemmed from the polarization of the competing ideologies of work and domesticity, which became the 'central axis' of the Women's Movement of the 1970s.⁷ However this polarization obscures the former identification of the 'split career' as 'the best of both worlds' and the radical new opportunity which Mary Dawson cited as the 'blueprint' chosen to suit women themselves. The 'blueprint' had been possible when each of these competing ideologies was expressed, recognized and valued as citizenship.

In the decade after Dawson's retirement, a new pattern of higher education leadership was established. Her successor at Newton Park was male, with an agenda for change designed to embrace the economic challenges of the 1970s, alongside amalgamation with the other higher education establishments in Bath.⁸ The male-dominated leadership which oversaw development of the College as it moved towards independence and university status at the end of the twentieth century, appears to have overlooked the origins of the College in the push ahead, ignoring the fact that it was Dawson and the founding generation who had established the College's philosophy of expansion and change. It was then that Dawson's portrait was removed from public view, and the early phase of the educational establishment disregarded.

⁶ Oram, *Women Teachers*, p.224.

⁷ Munford and Waters, *Feminism & Popular Culture*, p.73.

⁸ Newton Park became the central campus of *Bath College of Higher Education*, incorporating *Newton Park College*, *Bath College of Domestic Science*, and *Bath Academy of Art*.

This thesis has recovered Mary Dawson as a significant historical figure in the history of women's education in the UK, and as an example of an important group of women in the twentieth century. Her centrality in the narrative of Newton Park has highlighted the important role played by the ambitious, educated women like her who, throughout their lives, negotiated gendered expectations, negative perceptions and existing structures in order to be able to live full and abundant lives. Women like Mary Dawson belong to a specific time and place. Bound by professional rules concerning marriage, and as part of the generation which reached maturity immediately following the First World War, the spinster schoolmistress demonstrated through her own life the possibilities that education, a profession and economic independence could bring. In her commitment to her role and representing the most educated women of her generation, the female educator served as an example. In addition to holding positions of authority, these women also had to negotiate the landscape of societal pressure at a time when single, self-supporting women were perceived as a threat to the status quo, and in psychological terms, viewed as repressed and frustrated. But having negotiated these obstacles, these women had established their careers and taken on leadership responsibilities and were well placed to exploit the opportunities presented by the post-war expansion of education. Many women educators, liberal in outlook and progressively minded, were fully involved in the quest for equality and their positions as leaders and role models in their own communities were the tangible evidence of equality in action. Through their professional and personal networks, they were effective advocates for education, promoting their work and roles beyond their own colleges to the advantage of the profession as a whole. Research into the ATCDE papers, as well as the collections held at other universities, indicates there is more work to be done on women's networks in this period. Mary Dawson enjoyed associational links with other teachers, lecturers and college principals. She worked amidst members of the ATCDE and university colleagues, and also worked alongside those in local and national government. All of these examples of women's networks will bear further investigation, as they provide further insights into women's agency in the second and third quarter of the twentieth century.

In the collection and preservation of the College story, Dawson showed an awareness of the contribution that she had made to women's education, and

desire to pass it on. This desire is also felt in the oral testimony of former students, whose self-confidence in telling their stories acknowledges their personal agency. Whether through the archives they left or the words they have spoken, all of these women display knowledge of their importance within the educational world. They were, in their own words 'worth the investment'.⁹ At Newton Park, Dawson created a space in which women were encouraged to demonstrate agency, choosing the lives they wanted and exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, as shown in their testimony. In their lives, these women experienced successful and varied careers. For the women of Newton Park College, the option of teaching as a career had provided opportunities and choice. The responsibilities and duties of citizenship, embedded within their training and widespread in post-war discourse, could be expressed through the role they would play in their communities, their choice to marry or have children, and their ability to retrain and return to work in later life. The profession changed in order to accommodate all these actions.

This thesis has argued that Newton Park College was significant as part of an educational revolution. Those colleges led by women and for women acted as conduits of the development and growth of women's opportunities and women's leadership, in the field of higher education. In a period perceived as limiting for women, it is clear that on the contrary, these women who in the long 1950s chose teaching as a career had opportunities to shape their own lives, as employees, wives, parents and returning employees, since each of these roles was recognised and valued as important within a society eager for their contribution at every level. Women were the direct beneficiaries of post-war educational expansion, and served as the 'important carriers' of educational change.¹⁰ They were enabled to express citizenship through practical application of its rights and duties – a public life, with responsibility, agency and a high degree of visibility. They did not see their own lives as limited, and as a profession were amongst the first to be awarded equal pay. The generation they influenced, in their turn, began to take for granted that all these roles were possible; the next generation would be the ones to ask further questions about gender roles, in the same way that the post-war generation sought a different course to that of their own mothers and grandmothers. Young women's aspirations were raised as a result of the expansion of secondary and higher education, not only because of the

⁹ Alison S, female student, 1963-66. Oral testimony.

¹⁰ Dyhouse *Graduate Mothers* p.334.

improvements in education itself, but because of the women who taught and influenced them.¹¹

The women featured in this study were fully engaged with the wider world, and as Heron affirms ‘had a stronger sense of [their] own possibilities than the myths about the fifties allow.’¹² These myths are today being strengthened as the media continues to favour and emphasise images of domesticity. This perpetuates the message that the era was limiting to women, thus creating new historiographies which continue to overlook the lives and contributions of those who were there. This trend greatly increases the urgency for researchers to uncover more detail about the post-war world, and acknowledge the real contribution that the women of the long 1950s made to improving the lives and expectations of women overall. Pioneers may lead the way, but greater change is made possible by the legions who follow.

¹¹ Carol Dyhouse, ‘Was there ever a time when girls *weren’t* in trouble?’ *Women’s History Review*, 23.2, (2014) 272-274, p.273.

¹² Heron, *Truth Dare Promise*, p. 6.

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Appendix A: Summary of Oral and Written Testimony Subjects

Pseudonym	Years attended	Student or Staff	Roles, post-training	Marital status
Oral Testimony			(FT= Full time, PT= Part time)	M = married (d) = divorced S = single
Alison A	1962-65	student	FT, Primary, subject specialism, FT Peripatetic, Children, PT	M
Alison S	1963-66	student	FT, Primary, Primary, Married, Supply, Secondary, Primary, Children, Home Tutor, Campaigning, Degree, Community Projects & Campaigning, Educational Broadcasting	M (d)
Amy	1966-68	student	Children, Returners course, PT, Primary, FT	M
Ann	1951-53	student	FT, Primary, FT, Secondary, Children (Nursery established for Teacher's children) PT, FT, Home Tutor	M
Ann F	1956	staff	(Tutor at NPC)	S
Anna	1949-51	student	FT, Secondary UK, Secondary Europe, Head of Department, Degree, Married, Child, FT, At home with Child, Asked to return to teaching	M
Anne	1965-68	student	FT, Secondary, Married, Primary, Children, Primary Senior Management	M
Bill	1963-66	student	FT, Primary, subject specialism, Deputy, Head	S
Cherry	1949-51	student	FT, Primary, Children, PT Supply, PT, Opportunity Group	M
Christina	1947-49	student	FT, Infants, Primary, Married, PT, Supply teaching, Children, Family business	M
Harry	1965+	staff	(Tutor at NPC)	M
Helen	1962-65	student	FT, Child, Work, Child, FT Countywide Curriculum Support	M (d)
James	1960-63	student	FT, Secondary, Primary with subject specialism	M
Jan	1963-66	student	FT, Primary, Children, PT Supply teaching, Author	M
Jeffrey	1968+	staff	(Tutor at NPC)	M
Jo	1954-56	student	FT Junior, Junior, Infant, Children, Supply, gradually built up hours to FT, Deputy Head, Acting Head (offered Group 2	M

			headships but didn't want reduction in salary from Deputy in Grade 4 school)	
John	1964-67	student	FT, Primary, Secondary, PT Degree, Head of Department, Middle School, Master's Degree, Research, Subject Advisory Board, Secondary, OFSTED Inspector	M
Joseph	1965	student	FT, Secondary, subject specialism, Degree, FT, Secondary, Higher Education Tutor	M
Liz	1961-64	student	FT 3 years, Children, Own business	M
Naomi	1962-65	student	FT, Primary, Children, Primary	M
Shirley	1962-65	student	FT, Secondary, Primary, Headship, Researcher	S
Teresa	1965-68	student	FT, Primary, Children, PT, Hospital Tutor	M
Tom	1965-68	student	FT, Secondary, Head of Department, Researcher	M
Wendy	1962-65	student	FT, Primary, married, Child, PT, Primary, Further qualification, Home Tutor	M
Valerie	1951-53	student	FT, Primary, Married, FT Primary, Children, Asked to return to teaching, Carer to disabled partner	M
Written Testimonies				
Jane	1949-51	student	FT, Primary, Married, 2 children, Subject specialism, 3 rd Child, Local Council plus supply teaching, Community work, Chair of Council	M
Margaret	1949-51	student	FT, Secondary, Secondary, Married, Children, PT, FT	M
Meg	1951-53	student	FT Primary, Married, Children, Deputy head	M