

# *Women and the Construction Industry in Georgian Britain and Ireland*

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## ABSTRACT

While the role of women as designers and/or patrons of architecture in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland is increasingly recognised, their role in the making of architecture remains contested. This article sheds light on the subject by drawing not just on the extensive secondary literature, but also on records of livery companies and other primary sources in London and Dublin. It begins with the building site, focusing on female apprenticeship. Here substantial evidence is provided showing that girls bound to bricklayers, carpenters and plasterers as apprentices — the so-called ‘lost labourers’ of recent scholarship, recorded in guild registers and court minutes — did not in fact acquire craft skills or work as on-site operatives in those trades. The article then turns to those areas of the building process to which women did make a substantial contribution: first the practical realm, including brickmaking, lime-burning and the cleaning and preparation of carved and moulded work for painters and decorators; then the organisational realm of business, including property development, house-building and estate management. Taken together, these stories from the margins of architectural and labour histories make clear the distinction between competence in skills and competence in business, giving a more accurate picture of the multifarious nature of female participation in the construction industry in the Georgian era.

In recent decades, understanding of the roles of women as designers and/or patrons of architecture in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland has advanced considerably.<sup>1</sup> But a work of architecture is dependent on a range of intellectual and manual skills, from design to construction, and to date the role of women in the making as opposed to commissioning and designing of architecture remains somewhat contested. While construction-related matters occasionally occupied the minds of elite women — a letter of 5 July 1769 from Lady Arbella Denny to Lady Elizabeth Caldwell, concerning building progress at Castle Caldwell, County Fermanagh, describes a novel recipe for plastering ‘with cow dung and clay well tempered, and no lime’ — their contribution was principally confined to matters of patronage, design and project management.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, even though construction is widely acknowledged as having been a predominantly male environment, evidence for women as on-site operatives in this period has been advanced from different quarters.<sup>3</sup>

In a comprehensive, annotated list published in the *Georgian Group Journal* in 2000, Richard Hewlings identified sixty-nine females listed as carpenters, brickmakers and associated trades from a variety of manuscript and printed sources.<sup>4</sup> In the same issue

of that journal, Peter Guillery attributed a terrace of houses in Deptford High Street, which he described as 'distinctly ambitious' for this 'urban satellite' of London, to Mary Slade.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, Linda Clarke and Christine Wall presented an account of women who 'succeeded in working in the building industry', drawing on a range of sources spanning the late medieval period through to the present day and arguing that early opportunities were dramatically reduced from the early nineteenth century onwards, 'as gender divisions were sharply reinforced under capitalism'.<sup>6</sup> This aligns with Christopher Powell's earlier study of Bristol's nineteenth-century construction sites, which proposed that women's involvement 'took two forms, work with the hands of operative or labourer, and work as principal of a firm'.<sup>7</sup> Others have suggested that women did not in fact possess the requisite skills for active participation in the building process. Writing for an earlier period, Shelley Roff pointed to the 'habitual practice of employing women' on construction sites in early modern Europe, 'albeit in the most menial tasks', while Elizabeth Musgrave was unequivocal that, in eighteenth-century Brittany at least, women 'did not take part in on-site craft work'.<sup>8</sup>

So the broader question remains: in what capacities did women work in the building industry in the long eighteenth century? What did it mean when a woman was described, in so many trade directories or handbills of the period, as a carpenter, glazier or plumber?<sup>9</sup> Did this ever signify the possession of skills learned through years of apprenticeship and employment? What was the contribution of these women to work on the building site? Did women create independent workshops or was it more likely, as in the case of Eleanor Coade and her celebrated 'Artificial Stone Manufactory' at Lambeth, for female principals to acquire or inherit (and in some instances improve) already established craft businesses and product lines (Fig. 1)?<sup>10</sup> Drawing on a range of sources relating to the organisation and operations of the construction industries in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, this article represents an attempt to clarify the roles that women played in a wider British culture of building.<sup>11</sup>

#### APPRENTICESHIP AND WIDOWHOOD

In their historical overview of women in the building trades, Clarke and Wall pointed to two related issues pertinent to the present discussion: first, that apprenticeship was long preserved as 'a male institution' (linked both to property rights and to early modern definitions of masculine formation and development); and second, conversely, that women, though small in number, were apprenticed to and by implication worked in a variety of building crafts. All this changed, according to their thesis, under the influence of industrialised capitalism and the introduction of wage labour, with the exception of building materials production where women retained a 'significant presence'.<sup>12</sup>

But what do apprenticeship records reveal about working lives? For the purposes of this article, the court minutes of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers, one of the representative livery companies incorporated in early modern London, have been chosen for analysis. This selection was determined by the continued symbolic and political importance of the London guilds throughout the period under review, and by the comprehensiveness of the surviving records of companies dedicated to the building trades (while Dublin's guilds operated into the early decades of the nineteenth century,

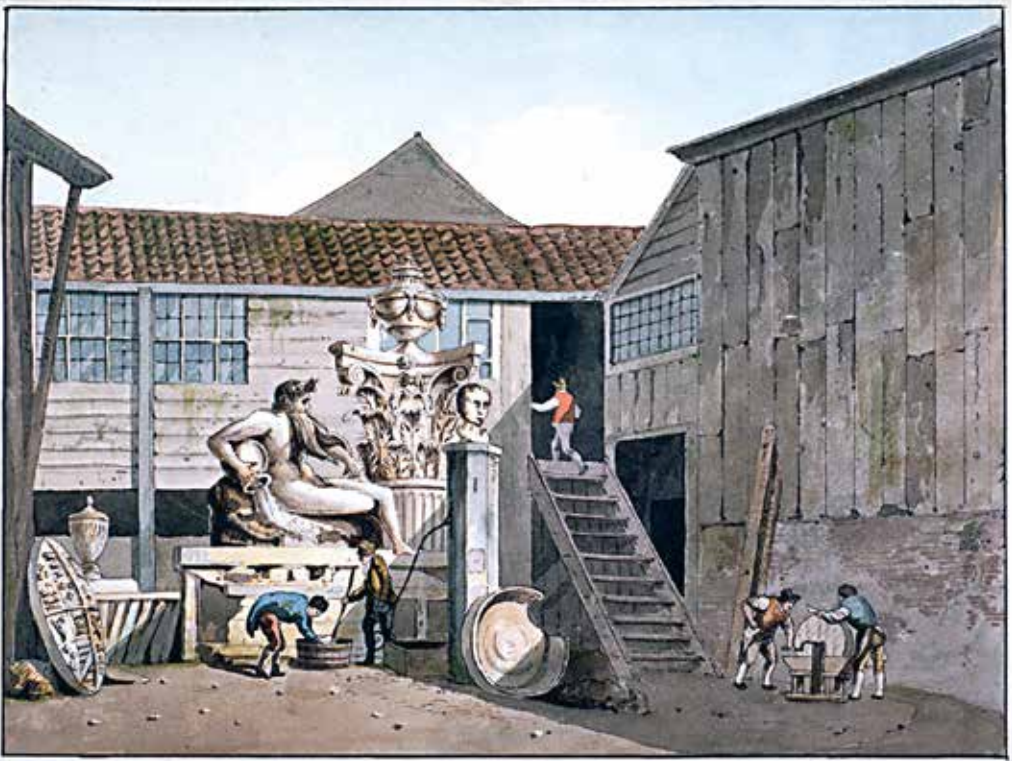


Fig. 1. George Shepherd, *Coade stone factory yard on Narrow Wall Street, Lambeth, London, c. 1800*, watercolour, London Metropolitan Archives (Heritage Image Partnership / Alamy Stock Photograph)

records for building trades are either fragmentary or entirely lost).<sup>13</sup> References to both women and girls are indeed present, but the statistics bear out the contention that female apprentices to members of craft guilds were always small in number. Of 1471 individuals bound between 1698 and 1800, only forty were girls (described as ‘daughters’ of a parent or guardian), approximately 2.7 per cent of the total number of apprentices bound to company principals during that period.<sup>14</sup> There are similar discouraging figures for other building crafts. Girls represented 0.6 per cent of apprentices bound to the Glaziers’ Company from 1694 to 1800, a similar percentage of those bound to the Tylers’ and Bricklayers’ Company from 1612 to 1800, and only 0.2 per cent of the total number bound to the Masons’ Company from 1663 to 1805.<sup>15</sup>

What can be deduced from the meagre information recorded in minute books and ledgers where, despite the dominance of men and boys, the names of women and girls are unambiguously present? What patterns of female engagement and employment, if any, appear? Foremost is the identification of masters to whom boys or girls (or both) were bound. Thomas Cogan, for example, bound a total of eight apprentices between 1736 and 1759, of whom six were boys and two were girls. Others, it seems, discriminated in favour of girls: of the 40 girls identified from the company minutes of the Worshipful

Company of Plaisterers, seventeen (approximately 43 per cent) were apprenticed to James Palmer. In fact, Palmer bound a total of nineteen apprentices between 1764 and 1798, only two of whom were boys. Three (out of four in total) apprentices bound to William Dodson between 1699 and 1708 were girls; and three girls were apprenticed to Thomas Hogan in the years 1743–59.<sup>16</sup> There is evidence too of mistresses, the female equivalent of company masters, in the apprenticeship ledgers: seventeen women bound boys and girls between 1706 and 1780, all but one of whom are identified as ‘widow’.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it is clear that some of these mistresses bound girls only: three girls were apprenticed to Margaret, widow of Edward Langley, between 1701 and 1705; and Martha, widow of John Steward, engaged girls in 1706, 1708 and again in 1709.<sup>18</sup> Given the limitations placed on women’s participation in guild administration and the right to work in incorporated trades — instituted by statutes that advanced what Clare Crowston has characterised as ‘a patriarchal vision of the social order’ — how did gender shape the instruction and professional prospects of these daughters of gentlemen, merchants and other middling sorts?<sup>19</sup>

In a pioneering study of apprenticeship and child labour in England, published in 1912, Olive Jocelyn Dunlop noted that ‘by far the greater proportion of girl apprentices were parish children’, that is, the children of poor citizens bound to a trade to avail of ‘a system of maintenance and general training, rather than of technical instruction’.<sup>20</sup> More recent scholarship has challenged this view, arguing that social class was not necessarily a discriminating factor, and that the median premium demanded by the London companies militated against the apprenticeship of parish children. In her study of women’s work in seventeenth-century London, Laura Gowing has noted how female apprenticeship in the tailoring and clothes-making guilds was, by the 1650s, ‘attracting gentry and clergy daughters [...] alongside urban and provincial artisans’ and yeomen’s daughters’.<sup>21</sup> More pertinent here is the substantive evidence that a girl apprenticed to a male craftsman was sometimes bound specifically to his wife’s separate occupation. Dunlop cited the example, in 1714, of a girl bound to a carpenter for seven years ‘to learn ye art of Milliner being his Wife’s trade’.<sup>22</sup> Keith Snell, writing in 1985, offered a spirited argument to counter this position. Acknowledging that apprenticeship represented only a fraction of women’s roles in artisan production, and finding evidence that ‘marked sexual division became less apparent as one progressed down the social scale’, he cited examples from a selection of primary and secondary sources that pointed to ‘the possibilities of a wider involvement in supposedly “male” trades’, including carpentry and bricklaying.<sup>23</sup>

Recent research on female apprenticeship, however, has pointed to a crucial issue in the evolution of guild practices and membership protocols in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which complicates Snell’s suggestion that, when a girl was apprenticed to a trade, ‘she was apprenticed just as a boy’.<sup>24</sup> Amy Louise Erickson noted that, by the mid-eighteenth century, ‘the London companies had, by and large, lost monopoly control of their trades’, with even the most powerful companies possessing ‘only tenuous connections to their nominal trade’.<sup>25</sup> Gowing developed this same point, noting that ‘the company to which a master belonged might not represent his craft, and was most unlikely to represent his wife’s work. In this sense apprenticed girls took part in a kind of fiction of participation.’<sup>26</sup> This ‘fiction of participation’ is

June the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1722

Slating Work Done on Trinity College

Shipping & Bussing of Tiles & Boards	to one Workman 4 Days	£00 4 0
	to one workman 1/2 Day	00 1 0
	to one Laborer 4 Days	00 4 0
	to six hundred of six penny nails	00 2 0
	to Limbs & Sand	00 2 0
for carrying of Laths & Plaster	to one Workman 2 Days each	00 2 0
	to one Laborer 2 Days	00 4 0
	to 2 hundred of nails	00 2 0
	to Limbs & Sand	00 0 5
		00 14 0
		£00 12 0
		12 4
		2 4 5

Received from Doctor John Blood Treasurer the Contents of the above Bill ~~for~~ for the use of my husband without my hand this 29<sup>th</sup> June 1722

Agnes Heatly

MUN/P/2/47/20

Fig. 2. Signature of Agnes Heatly endorsing receipt of payment for her husband's slating work at Trinity College, Dublin, 29 June 1722 (Board of Trinity College Dublin)

confirmed in the case of James Palmer, described above, who bound seventeen girls as apprentices over a period of thirty-four years. In court minutes, his trade was given as 'haberdasher', suggesting that his own membership of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers was by means other than a specialism in the titular trade.<sup>27</sup> Further examples from the Plaisterers' Company abound. Esther, daughter of Thomas Cook of Cheapside in London, was bound to Ann Smith in January 1778; Smith, a member of the company

Jan. 22. 1755

Recd. of Cha. Trubshaw y<sup>e</sup> Sum  
of Seventeen Pounds Twelve Shilling  
in full for Thirty two Thousand of  
Brick now standing in W. Robinsons  
Croft by me Frances Bagger y<sup>e</sup>  
her Mark.

17<sup>l</sup> 12<sup>s</sup> 0  


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4 8 # #

Fig. 3. Mark of Frances Baggerly acknowledging payment for delivery of bricks to Charles Trubshaw, 22 January 1755 (Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales)

in her capacity as a widow, is described as practising the trade of 'mantua maker' (a mantua being an overgown or robe).<sup>28</sup> In other instances, a girl's premium might be administered by an external agency: in 1782, Elizabeth Kent's apprenticeship to James Sydenham, another haberdasher, recorded the 'perpetual Charity paid by the Company of Drapers London'.<sup>29</sup> Records of the Tylers' and Bricklayers' Company show a similar picture, with mistresses to whom girls were bound between 1612 and 1800 variously identified as milliner and mantua maker.<sup>30</sup>

From the foregoing it is clear that, while girls were sometimes 'apprenticed' to plasterers, painters, stonemasons and glaziers, this did not determine the course of their training or professional life thereafter.<sup>31</sup> This complicates what can be deduced from livery company ledgers and minute books generally: apprenticeship to, and membership of, a named craft guild did not necessarily indicate a training or proficiency in that craft.<sup>32</sup> This was true for both genders. However, while both boys and girls may have been apprenticed to a variety of trades under the aegis of the Worshipful Company of Plasterers, it seems clear that only boys would have been selected for apprenticeship to the plastering trade. This accords with Deborah Simonton's assertion that apprenticeship was universally regarded as a form of training for the gendered

roles and values that boys and girls were expected to fulfil as adults.<sup>33</sup> It also aligns with Geoffrey Crossick's bold claim that, 'Artisan status was inherently gendered; to be an artificer was to be male. Indeed, the ideal career progression for an artisan — from apprentice to journeyman to master craftsman — was centred on the male life-cycle.'<sup>34</sup>

This point is further corroborated by the contemporary advice literature on trades and professions which refers to women and girls only in terms of textile and needlework occupations, or those involving unskilled labour, raising the related issue of how well a wife might be versed in the particulars of her husband's trade.<sup>35</sup> Snell argued that 'the assumption was that as the wife of a craftsman she would have learnt the trade, and worked with her husband at it, to a degree which allowed her the status of an independent mistress after his death'.<sup>36</sup> But to what extent did a wife learn her husband's craft trade as opposed to his craft business? How often did her role extend to learning how to calculate the geometry of a roof truss, for example, or develop the expertise to create a modillion cornice in timber, stone or plaster?<sup>37</sup> Was it not more likely that, working alongside their husbands, women developed an understanding of what was required to conduct a skilled workforce, organise credit terms and manage the supply of labour and materials?<sup>38</sup> This represented an extension of their role as manager of the domestic household, which included overseeing the wellbeing of journeymen and apprentices. Indeed, while degrees of literacy and numeracy varied across the social strata — being particularly high among the urban artisanal classes — it is indisputable that women routinely participated in the complex administration of building projects. In June 1722, Agnes, wife of Abraham Heatly, endorsed a bill for slating work at Trinity College Dublin, using a fine copperplate hand (Fig. 2).<sup>39</sup> This may be contrasted with Frances Baggerly who, in January 1755, confirmed receipt of payment for the supply of bricks to the Staffordshire architect and mason Charles Cope Trubshaw by means of her 'mark' (Fig. 3).<sup>40</sup>

On the question of widows (and wives) as managers of building businesses, we are on a firmer foundation. Writing in 1727, Daniel Defoe advised, 'I would have every Tradesman make his wife so much acquainted with his trade, and so much mistress of the managing part of it, that she might be able to carry it on if she pleased, in case of his death'; moreover, he reckoned it 'an injustice upon the woman' if a tradesman neglected to acquaint his wife with his business.<sup>41</sup> In fact, widows of guild members enjoyed what has been described as a 'prescriptive right to continue in their husband's trades', often to the benefit of their sons and other male family relatives.<sup>42</sup> In 1769, the Dublin plasterer and painter Gregory Sproule petitioned the Guild of St Luke to be admitted free of the company: described as 'Son in Law of Mr Patrick Wall late a free Brother of this Corporation, and Partner with the Widow of said Patrick Wall', his qualification and admission were secured.<sup>43</sup> This is further confirmed by the dependence of widows on male operatives both as 'able workmen' and for the instruction of apprentices bound to the family business.<sup>44</sup> When Mrs Isabella Drake, who ran a plumbing business from Sycamore Alley in Dublin, died in 1779, her nephew and successor Edward made a public announcement of his continuation 'in the most extensive manner' and recommended himself to the public by making clear that he, 'during her life, solely conducted her Business'.<sup>45</sup> At Bath in 1793, Martha Morley, widow of the plasterer Francis Morley, assured potential clients that 'Her Father and self will keep workmen in every respect capable of executing their undertakings with strength, neatness, and

expedition'.<sup>46</sup> In Leeds in 1809, Sarah Askin 'engaged a person of approved abilities to assist in the plumbing and glazing business'.<sup>47</sup> Not all proprietary transitions from husband to wife were bound to be successful, and the ability to manage a workforce, understand the market and maintain profitability was paramount. In November 1787, Jane Law, widow of the Dublin stonecutter Arthur Law, advised 'the Friends of her late Husband, and the Public in General, that she continues said Business, and hopes for the Support of her late Husband's Friends'.<sup>48</sup> Evidently his reputation and her acumen were of some standing in Dublin's building community: in 1792 alone, she supplied stone flags, steps, palisade walls and ornamental chimneypieces to three master builders working in Eccles Street, Marlborough Street and Mountjoy Square.<sup>49</sup> As managers of these businesses, women were held to account if the work was found wanting: in May 1770, the architect William Chambers wrote to Mrs Hillman, plumber, complaining that the new glazing of windows for the kitchen garden at Kew 'by her men are very ill done'.<sup>50</sup>

A related issue was the importance of family enterprise. Recent research on the condition of 'urban singles' in early modern Europe has suggested that marital status, rather than gender, dictated success in business and that 'enterprises and workshops that required large capital investments were dominated by married couples'.<sup>51</sup> This extended to widows and to the provision made by craftsmen for the future success of their business and household. In 1767, Margaret, widow of John Reed, a plumber of Cook Street in Dublin, announced the continuation of the trade in partnership with their son, Samuel. Describing herself as 'the acting Executrix' of her late husband's concerns, she requested 'all Persons to whom her late Husband was indebted, to furnish her with their Accounts'.<sup>52</sup> The probate will of the lime-burner Arthur Conolly, dated April 1808, bequeathed his concerns to his wife Elinor with a covenant that, in the event of her death, 'his business [was] to be conducted by his daughter Mary', indicating his confidence in both his wife's and daughter's ability to continue successfully in the trade.<sup>53</sup> Widows with sons brought up to the family trade represented a common operational model throughout the period. In Dublin, Mary Child & Sons provided carpentry works for Trinity College between 1792–95.<sup>54</sup> In 1793, Simon and Samuel Simpson, house painters of March Lane in Leeds, returned thanks to their patrons 'for the many favours conferred on themselves, and their late mother, Mary Simpson', and took the opportunity to announce the continuance of the business and to call on 'those indebted to the said Mary Simpson and Sons' to discharge their arrears.<sup>55</sup>

#### WOMEN AND GIRLS ON SITE

This clearer understanding of female apprenticeship calls into question the figures collated from the records of the London guilds and the identification of what some historians have referred to as 'lost labourers' (that is, women) of the early modern building world.<sup>56</sup> Given the paucity of reliable documentary evidence for women and girls in bricklaying, carpentry, plastering and related trades, is James Ayres correct to suggest that, aside from 'unskilled work as in the drudgery of the brickfields', the role of women was always 'peripheral' and that 'in the practice of the building crafts women seem to have played no part'?<sup>57</sup>





Fig. 4. Brickmakers from *W. H. Pyne, The Microcosm, or, A Picturesque Delineation of the Arts, Agriculture, Manufactures, & c. of Great Britain, 1803, plate IV* (private collection)

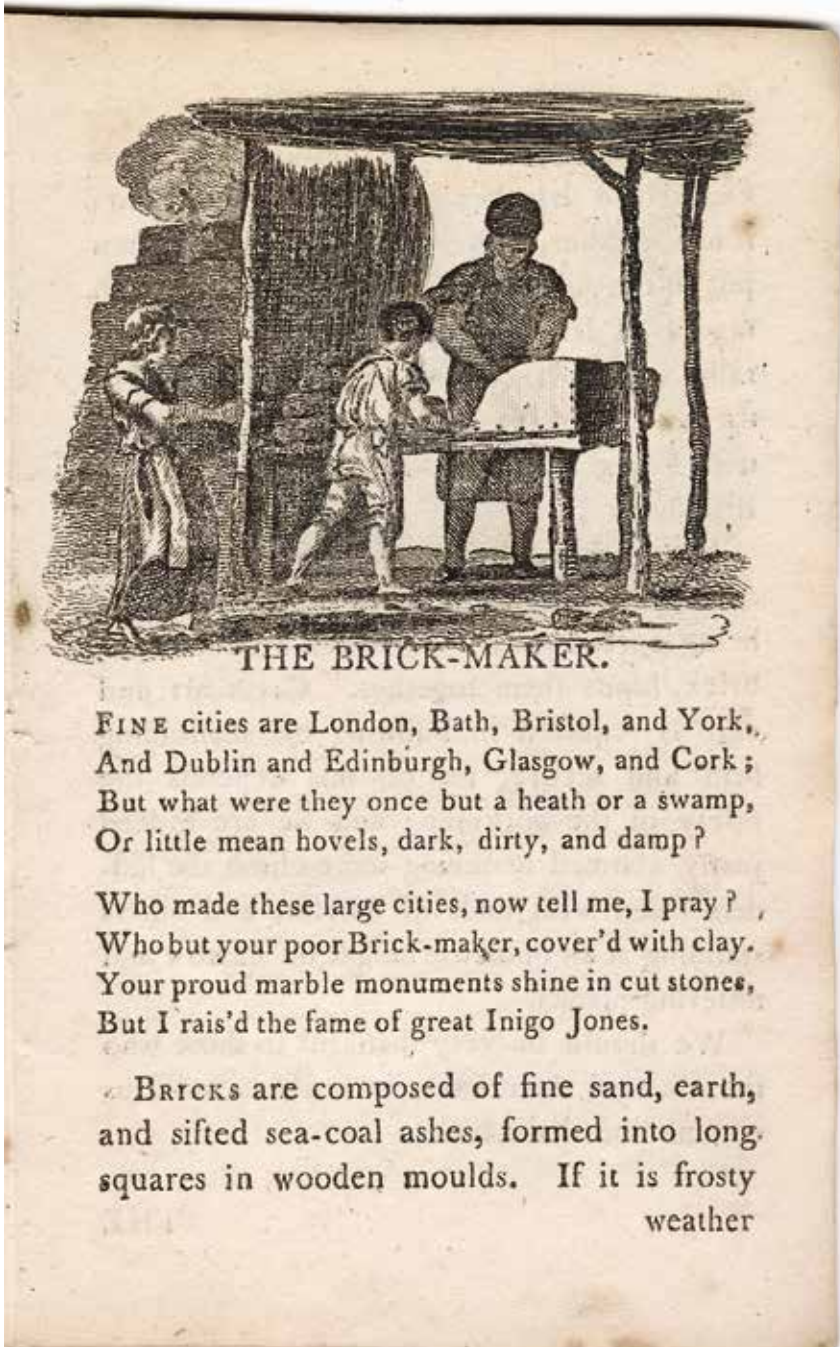


Fig. 5. The Brick-Maker from William Darton, *Little Jack of All Trades*, 1806, p. 29 (Toronto Public Library)

The visual evidence certainly appears to corroborate the notion that female participation in the family economy was 'most apparent among the lowest social classes', extending to the lowest stratum of the building industry.<sup>58</sup> Women are shown making bricks in W. H. Pyne's *The Microcosm or, a Picturesque Delineation of the Arts, Agriculture, Manufactures, &c.* (1803); and girls (alongside boys) assist in this same relatively unskilled practice in an illustration accompanying the description of the work of the brickmaker in William Darton's *Little Jack of All trades* (1806), a book aimed at the children of the artisan and labouring classes (Figs 4 and 5).<sup>59</sup> Significantly, Joseph Collyer's *The Parent and Guardian's Directory, and the Youth's Guide, in the Choice of a Profession or Trade* (1761) noted that brickmakers 'seldom or never take apprentices', intimating both an unstructured entry and progress in that occupation, and substantiating the habitual employment of women and girls as manual labour.<sup>60</sup> Other textual and visual sources suggest that women formed a key part of this industry. In *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts* (1818), the task of forming bricks is described as involving several individuals operating as a 'gang', defined as 'one or two men, a woman, and two children, to each of which is assigned a different department in the occupation'. Moreover, gangs sometimes consisted of 'branches of the same family, as the father and mother, and four or five children of different ages'.<sup>61</sup> In his *Rudimentary Treatise on the Manufacture of Bricks and Tiles*, published in 1850, Edward Dobson described the role of women in the hierarchical structure of manufacture:

Everything being in readiness, and a supply of well tempered clay having been placed on the stool by the feeder, whose business it is to carry the tempered clay from the pug-mill to the moulding stool, the *clot-moulder*, who is generally a woman, sprinkles the stool with dry sand, and taking a *clod*, or *clot*, from the heap of tempered clay, dexterously kneads and moulds it roughly into the shape of a brick, and passes it to the moulder on her left hand.<sup>62</sup>

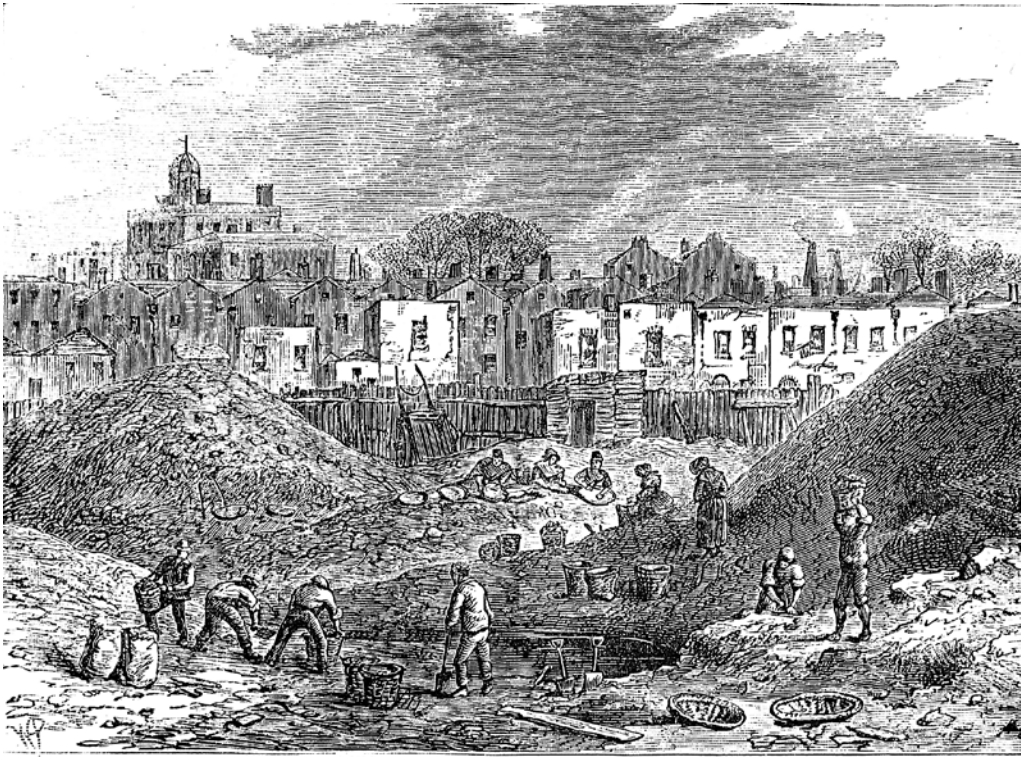
The manufacture of bricks and tiles was unregulated until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and while some questioned the 'reputable' nature of the business ('especially to be journeymen, if they can properly be called so'), others deemed that it required 'a good deal of management and dexterity'.<sup>63</sup> In this context, women operated with varying degrees of success. In 1757, Sarah Newman assigned to her son Edward 'all her estate right' and 'all her share moiety and proportion' in the long-established Caves Brickfield in Irishtown, Dublin, which had supplied bricks to the architect Richard Castle for work at Trinity College.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Sarah Hayden, Mary Fish and Mary Tunstall, brickmakers in the London boroughs of St Pancras, Haggerston and Brentford respectively, were independently fined by the Court of Assistants of the Company of Tylers and Bricklayers for breaches of product standards throughout the 1720s.<sup>65</sup> This more active participation by women is arguably reflected in the composition of the artist Francis Wheatley's *Brickmakers*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1786 (Fig. 6).<sup>66</sup> Women also worked on dust heaps, sieving coal ashes for breeze (cinder dust) to sell to brickmakers; described as a 'curious sight', this was a common practice well into the nineteenth century (Fig. 7).<sup>67</sup> Bricks aside, it is worth noting the relative scarcity of images of labouring women in the Georgian era: acknowledging that 'work was a most common experience for



Fig. 6. Francis Wheatley, *Brickmakers*, 1816, coloured print (Edward McParland)

all women', Isabelle Baudino has argued that representation was complicated by the exigencies of gendered expectation and social class.<sup>68</sup>

One specifically gendered task associated with the building, or rather decorating, industry is described in *Pincot's Treatise on the Practical Part of Coach and House Painting* (1811). This recommends that 'a great help to your work would be to let the women wash, and clean it well', and further states that it is 'always done in Ireland by women employed by Painters for that purpose, who clean before and after workmen'.<sup>69</sup> This practice is confirmed by the measured accounts for painting and decorating work at Trinity College Dublin, and from the same source we can further determine the value of this work in gendered economic terms. For redecorating work at the Provost's House in 1790, for example, between two and four women were paid thirteen pence per day for 'Scouring the Painted Works [with] Potash, Sand &c'. As one might expect, this is substantially less than the four shillings per day demanded by a skilled journeyman plasterer, but it is also less than the twenty-one pence day rate for a labourer and the fifteen pence paid for a 'boy', presumably a reference to the menial (meaning unskilled) tasks expected of a jobbing apprentice.<sup>70</sup> Donald Woodward has argued that lower rates of pay for women 'reflected deeply embedded male attitudes relating to the economic and social inferiority of women'.<sup>71</sup> On the building site, however, this



THE DUST-HEAPS, SOMERS TOWN, IN 1836.

Fig. 7. The Dust-Heaps, Somers Town, in 1836, from *Edward Walford, Old and New London, 1877, vol. 5, p. 372* (Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0)

discrepancy also likely indicates the type of labour (and working hours) expended by the average working woman compared with her male counterpart: as Shelley Roff's research has shown, transportation of materials was 'the most common task' women undertook on building sites in medieval and early modern Europe.<sup>72</sup> Gender dictated income in other ways too. In her pioneering study of women workers, first published in 1930, Ivy Pinchbeck argued that industrial wages for women in the eighteenth century 'nearly always refer to family earnings'.<sup>73</sup> More recently, Deborah Valenze has noted the 'exigencies of [women's] familial roles' when calculating wage differentials between the sexes.<sup>74</sup>

This brings us to the case of Margaret Todderick (c. 1720–84), a hitherto largely unknown figure in Irish architectural and building histories.<sup>75</sup> Operating a kiln from the appropriately named Lime Street, adjacent to the Liffey quayside, she was the sole woman in a list of seventeen 'Limeburners of the City and County of Dublin' who in 1774 publicly endorsed the 'Act for preventing Frauds in the Measurement of Lime'; the act had received royal assent in that year and introduced a new standard of measure (the bushel replacing the hogshead).<sup>76</sup> A more substantial account of her circumstances



Fig. 8. Ceiling of front first-floor room (detail) at 17 St Stephen's Green, Dublin, created by Michael Stapleton, c. 1778, photograph by Stephen Farrell of 2007

is recorded in the *Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*. This relates to the heads of a bill introduced in 1775 entitled 'An Act for preventing the erecting of Lime Kilns in the City of Dublin or suburbs thereof', the purpose of which was to confine noxious trades to the edges of the expanding city in response to complaints about public health and safety. Todderick's petition to the Commons, heard on 15 November 1775, stated that her premises lay less than 100 yards inside the boundary of the proposed 'City Lamps' and that 'the Petitioner and her deceased husband expended upwards of 900l. sterling in erecting said Kiln and every other Necessary to carry on said Manufactory, by which alone she supports herself and Family, and unless the House takes her Case, under its peculiar Circumstances, into Consideration, she will be driven to Ruin, and all her Industry and Capital wasted'.<sup>77</sup> Similar petitions were heard from her male counterparts in the lime-burning business and collectively realised a favourable outcome.<sup>78</sup> Thus the traces of Todderick in the historical record provide a glimpse of a working life rather than evidence of a working practice.

Reflecting on a broader range of building activity, however, our focus might widen to include operatives and entrepreneurs whose products and services underpinned other trades. In 1774, Margaret Todderick's daughter Frances married the plasterer Michael Stapleton, one of the foremost exponents of the Adam decorative style in late eighteenth-century Dublin.<sup>79</sup> Given this connection, it seems likely that Todderick's lime kiln supplied at least some of the raw materials for Stapleton's decorating business and so formed a material component of the elegant plasterwork ceilings for which he is renowned (Fig. 8). It also seems reasonable to assume that women such as Todderick developed a keen knowledge and appreciation of the materials they sold and the services they undertook.<sup>80</sup> Margaret McGuire, a grocer of Fishamble Street in Dublin, evidently



Fig. 9. *Thomas Rowlandson, Delabole Slate Quarry, near Camelford, Cornwall, 1817, watercolour (Victoria and Albert Museum)*

knew the properties of the building products stocked in her premises. Advertising a quantity of Dutch-imported tarras (a coarse plaster mortar) in 1782, she described it as

A Cement, which, when made up with Quick-Lime, and a thin Coat thereof laid on Walls exposed to Water or Weather, Water Cisterns, the Tops of Vaults built under Ground, or Aqueducts of any Sort round Gentlemen's Dwelling-Houses or Improvements, will most effectually Staunch them, and prevent the Moisture from penetrating.<sup>81</sup>

In a similar vein, we might take account of the general invisibility of women's business and labour in this period. In an astute observation, Olive Dunlop reflected on how the services of a craftsman's daughters and wife constituted 'the only cheap casual labour' he might routinely obtain, describing it as a 'peculiar value' within a professional and economic hierarchy.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Roff noted how 'cleaning or providing food for the husband and apprentices' formed an important part of the 'economy of the building trades'.<sup>83</sup> The depictions of the slate quarry at Delabole in Cornwall by Thomas Rowlandson (1817) and of brickfields at Edmonton, Middlesex, by George Forster (1856) illustrate this important aspect of a successful family enterprise, with women

shown in charge of provisioning a busy male workforce and looking after children (Fig. 9).<sup>84</sup> In concert with related evidence for women's general involvement in the 'heavy work of fetching and carrying', such images confirm the reciprocal roles that men and women played in the household economy of labouring families.<sup>85</sup> Taken together, these visual and textual sources complement what has been described as the 'double burden' (manual and reproductive) of mothers in paid labour.<sup>86</sup> Recent scholarship on gendered diversity in the early modern workplace has also highlighted the related 'multiple employments' that shaped everyday lives.<sup>87</sup>

#### WOMEN AS PROPERTY DEVELOPERS

At the other end of the social spectrum, and indeed the architectural/building hierarchy, was the property developer. Though largely a male preserve, property and real estate development was evidently a socially approved role for women. Elizabeth McKellar has shown that women in seventeenth-century London acted in a variety of capacities, including as investors through mortgage loans.<sup>88</sup> More recently, Juliet Learmouth has shown how, in the transformation and development of Whitehall as a prestigious residential neighbourhood after the fire of 1698, approximately one-third of the leaseholders were single women, principally widows.<sup>89</sup> While histories of women as designers of their own houses and private estates proceed apace, the following account focuses on those whose design and capital investment made a significant impact on the public realm, in towns and cities across Britain and Ireland.

Sarah Archdall (née Spurling) provides an interesting representative case study. Though biographical details are slight, she was originally from London and in c. 1745 married Nicholas Archdall, a member of the Irish House of Commons representing County Fermanagh.<sup>90</sup> Widowed in 1763, and likely under advice from her husband's executors, Archdall sought to overturn the terms of her husband's will: specifically the family interest in the Mount Eccles estate in north County Dublin which had been acquired in 1748 and was then held in trust for 'her Life, and afterwards to be sold for the Benefit of the Petitioners the Minors, the Children of the said Sarah'. Her petition to the Commons, recorded in February 1766, outlined her proposal:

That the said Grounds and Premises lie contiguous to the City of *Dublin*, and from their Situation will be taken by Persons in Lots for building upon, if Power to make Building Leases thereof can be obtained. That all the Petitioners, the Children of the said *Nicholas Archdall* by the said Petitioner *Sarah*, are Minors, [...] and until they all come of age no Building Leases can be granted, and it will greatly tend to the Benefit of the Petitioner *Sarah*, and her Children, to have Power to grant Building Leases, which, [...] cannot be remedied effectually by any other than the Legislative Authority.<sup>91</sup>

Success was forthcoming and the bill received royal assent. A year later, in August 1767, a notice in the *Dublin Journal* advised:

To be Let in Lots for Building, the Lands of Mount Eccles [...] containing seven Acres, which for Situation, Air and Prospect, cannot be exceeded by any in or





Fig. 10. 20-21 Great Denmark Street (left) and 51 North Great George's Street, Dublin, built 1768–72 by Sarah Archdall, photograph of 2023 by the author

about Dublin [...]. For further Particulars, enquire of Mrs. Archdale, at Mount Eccles, where a Plan of the whole may be seen.<sup>92</sup>

The request for interested parties to 'enquire of Mrs. Archdale' indicates her primary role and her name appears on ground leases thereafter, including the contiguous 20/21 Great Denmark Street and 51 North Great George's Street (built 1769–72). Forming the corner site of the development, these two plots were described respectively as ground on which 'she afterwards built and erected a good dwelling house and offices' and 'on which Sarah Archdall has built a house'; with the two cleverly combined to form a single grand elevation to the principal street, it offered a template perhaps for potential speculators, investors and master builders (Fig. 10).<sup>93</sup> Over the course of the next two decades, the present North Great George's Street was extended to meet Great Britain (now Parnell) Street, while Great Denmark Street continued the line of Gardiner's Row,



Fig. 11. *Royal Crescent, Ramsgate, built from 1826 to designs by Mary Townley, photograph of 2019 (CC BY 2.0)*

part of the extensive and expanding Gardiner estate, and likely the inspiration for Archdall's decision to capitalise on Dublin's mid-century building boom.<sup>94</sup>

Another representative individual is Mary Townley (1754–1817) who, according to Geraint Franklin, 'operated with relative autonomy in her family's property dealings' as architect of landmark housing schemes in the English seaside town of Ramsgate, which grew as a popular bathing resort from mid-century.<sup>95</sup> Drawings in Townley's hand indicate that she provided the designs for speculative ventures undertaken by her husband John (d. 1817), a successful attorney who invested in town property from the 1780s, and later in partnership with their son, Robert. Described by Franklin as a 'skilled and imaginative designer', Mary Townley is credited with directing and overseeing building operations, with notable schemes including Spencer Square of c. 1802–05, the commanding seafront elevation of Royal Crescent from 1826 (Fig. 11) and Devonshire Place (c. 1830).<sup>96</sup>

Businesswomen also exploited the opportunity to convert capital into real estate. English industrialist Sarah Clayton (1712–79) operated a successful colliery business in the 1750s and 1760s and was active in municipal politics and civic affairs in her native Liverpool.<sup>97</sup> Architecture was clearly an interest. In 1749 she lobbied the city corporation,

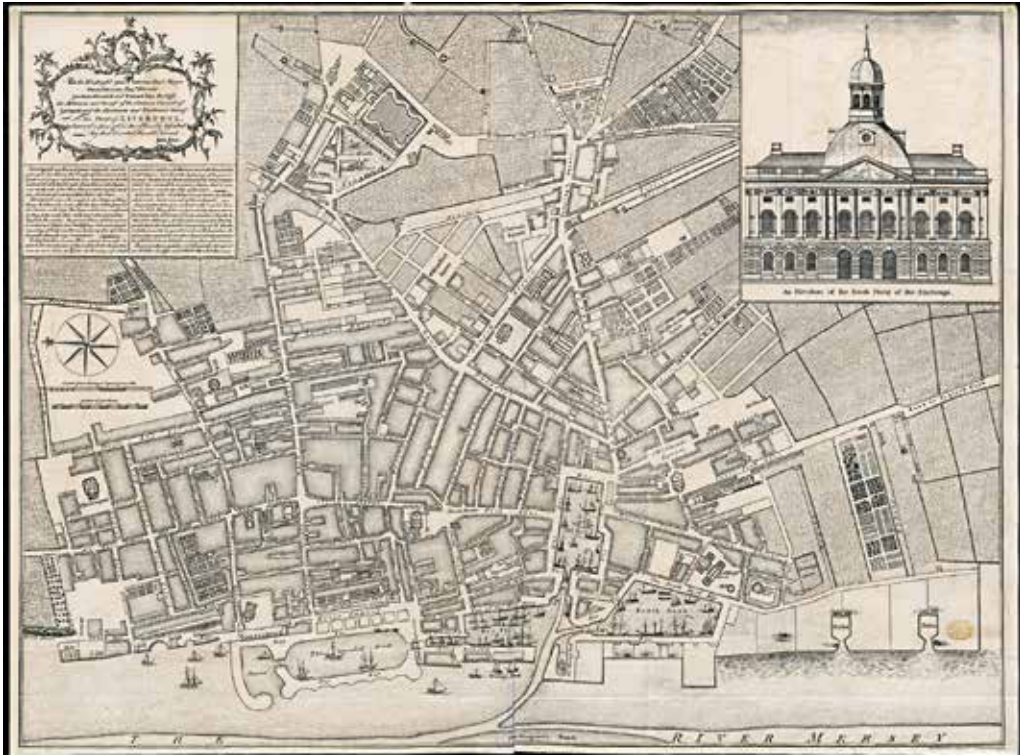


Fig. 12. Plan of Liverpool, 1765, surveyed by John Eyes and engraved by Thomas Kitchin, showing Clayton Square towards the top (British Library)

recommending John Wood, the architect of ‘many useful and ornamental buildings’ at Bath, for the design of a proposed merchant exchange, while her portrait, commissioned from Joseph Wright of Derby in the late 1760s, shows her with an engraving of the plan of the Propylaea, the monumental gatehouse to the Acropolis in Athens.<sup>98</sup> With the creation of Clayton Square (built 1751–85) and its tributary streets, Clayton is now recognised as one of the principal figures of Liverpool’s mid-century urban morphology: a symmetrical composition of uniform brick terraces (since demolished), it has been described by Joseph Sharples as the ‘most ambitious’ development of its time and ‘one of the few attempts at formal Georgian planning’ in the city (Fig. 12).<sup>99</sup> In a similar manner, Mary Slade’s speculatively built houses in Deptford High Street (1775–85), noted above, were, in Guillery’s words, ‘locally unparalleled in many of their attributes, standard though these had become in central and west London’.<sup>100</sup>

The role of women in estate management in general has also become clearer through recent research. Pioneering studies by Finola O’Kane and Briony McDonagh illustrated the complex ways in which elite women negotiated legal restrictions on property ownership, developing an active interest and participation in architectural patronage and building, landscaping, forestry and agricultural improvement.<sup>101</sup>

But others were more considerably involved in reckoning with the vicissitudes of building production and on-site progress. Eve McAulay uncovered the key role that Barbara Verschoyle (d. 1837), and indeed her mother before her, played as agent for the absentee Richard Fitzwilliam, the seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam, overseeing for nearly forty years the complex administrative affairs related to his suburban estate in south County Dublin. This was a sort of ‘middle management’ role predicated on ‘the collection of rents and the negotiating of new leases, [and her] acting as mediator between tenants or prospective tenants and the landlord’.<sup>102</sup> An example of Verschoyle’s daily business is recorded in a letter to Fitzwilliam dated December 1796. Against a backdrop of political and economic uncertainty in Ireland resulting from the French wars, her report on building progress across the estate notes that at Baggot Street there were ‘a good many Houses Built but not all let’, while at Warrington Place the tenants had ‘laid out a good deal of money on sinking Vaults & range walls’ but were two years arrears in rent.<sup>103</sup>

Further references, albeit sporadic, confirm that property management and development were considered appropriate occupations for middling women. In 1793, Miss Austin announced that Clontarf Crescent, County Dublin, was ‘to be let for building in lots’; while the plan ‘and a description of its situation’ were available for public inspection at the Royal Exchange (now City Hall), interested parties would be advised of ‘her terms’ on application.<sup>104</sup> Elsewhere in Dublin, Maria Hasler was a named developer of property in the fashionable seaside address of Martello Terrace in 1840, part of the Longford De Vesce estate, while ‘the gentler sex’, according to an editorial in the *Dublin Builder* magazine, was a key agent in the evolution of the Rathmines suburb of the city in the 1860s.<sup>105</sup> Fire insurance policies provide further evidence of women’s participation in speculative building projects: between 1771 and 1774, Elizabeth Harrison and Mary Grisson, both of London, who described their business as ‘carpenter’ and ‘bricklayer’ respectively, insured a total of 45 houses under construction.<sup>106</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Aside from numerous examples of elite women as patrons and designers of architecture in varying capacities, and of widows as proprietors of their deceased husbands’ concerns, it is clear that on building sites across Britain and Ireland what has been termed the ‘stronger female presence’ remained on the margins, namely in brickfields and in the unskilled labour of fetching, carrying and cleaning.<sup>107</sup> While questions over the suitability of women for this form of ‘degrading labour’ came increasingly to the fore during the course of the nineteenth century — not to mention the supposedly ‘brute intellect’ concomitant with such working conditions — the employment of women remained a popular incentive for lowering operating costs.<sup>108</sup>

Prevented by custom and by design from learning the ‘mysteries’ of the building crafts, women nonetheless participated in the building industry in important ways, transcending (by desire or necessity) the paternalistic view of being ‘unfit’ for employment in building yards and construction sites. They also made tangible and enduring interventions in the design and planning of new streets and squares, and in the supervision and management of large-scale urban developments. On balance,

however, the evidence presented here outweighs the claims made in previous scholarship regarding women as the 'lost labourers' of architectural history. Although guild ledgers are notoriously laconic, ambiguous and at times unreliable, where they are explicit it is significant that girls are apprenticed to men and women whose occupations align with what were considered gender-appropriate crafts and skills, such as millinery and haberdashery. While we cannot exclude the possibility that some young women were bound to building tradesmen and developed the requisite skills to operate as craftspeople in the construction industry, no authentic figure of this kind has emerged from the historical record. The receipt of payment for building work does not signify the undertaking of skilled work, and it is notable that widows and those with the title 'Mrs' predominate in the lists of those identified as craftswomen from printed and manuscript sources.

The limited place of women in the historiography of building culture in the long eighteenth century is primarily, then, a consequence of the restrictions placed on women's instruction and participation in the building trades. Just as interest in the design of architecture has eclipsed histories of the making and managing of architectural projects, so has interest in building crafts or skills eclipsed histories of building materials provision and the role of unskilled labour. With this paradigm in mind, it is arguably less a matter of women being forgotten or ignored in the historical record and more that they have been hiding in plain sight — we have simply been looking in the wrong places. Shifting our focus from design and construction towards the fields of property development and speculation, business management and estate agency, and materials supply and retail, we will likely find women and girls more fully and unambiguously present.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Versions of this article were first rehearsed at two conferences: 'Embroidered with Dust and Mortar: Women and Architecture, 1660–1830', organised by the Georgian Group (London, September 2019); and the sixth international meeting of the European Architectural History Network, in the session on 'The Role of Women in the Building of Cities in Medieval and Early Modern Europe' (Edinburgh, June 2021). I am grateful to Amy Boyington and Shelley Roff respectively for the opportunity to speak at these events. I am indebted to Christine Casey and Elizabeth McKellar for their comments on advanced drafts of the text, and to Peter Guillery for sharing new unpublished research captured in the text. Comments from the peer review process and from the editorial team of *Architectural History* helped refine the argument and are gratefully acknowledged.

#### BIOGRAPHY

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## NOTES

- 1 For example, Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses, 1670–1830* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003); Terence Dooley, Maeve O’Riordan and Christopher Ridgway, eds, *Women and the Country House in Ireland and Britain* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018).
- 2 Rosemary Raughter, ‘“My Dear Lady C”’: Letters of Lady Arbella Denny to Lady Caldwell, 1754–1777’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 41 (2009), pp. 135–200 (p. 179).
- 3 James Ayres, *Building the Georgian City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 7; Elizabeth McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: The Development and Design of the City 1660–1720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 93.
- 4 Richard Hewlings, ‘Women in the Building Trades, 1600–1850’, *Georgian Group Journal*, 10 (2000), pp. 70–83.
- 5 Peter Guillery, ‘The Further Adventures of Mary Lacy’, *Georgian Group Journal*, 10 (2000), pp. 61–69 (p. 67). On this topic, see also Peter Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth-Century London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 208, 211–13. Subsequent research has both clarified and complicated Guillery’s original findings. Mary Slade (née Lacy) – who, cross-dressing in her youth, had gained an apprenticeship as a shipwright and was assumed to have acted as master builder for at least a decade from the mid-1770s – was, it seems, not responsible for erecting these houses along Deptford High Street. Rather, it was another Mary Slade, living in the same street and described as a ‘spinster and shopkeeper’, who most likely acquired this ground as a freehold and acted as an independent property developer. I am grateful to Peter Guillery for this information, acknowledging the findings of John Coulter, historian and former librarian/archivist at the Local History and Archives Centre, Lewisham <lewishamheritage.blogspot.com/2019/02/in-navy-women-serving-as-men-in-royal.html> [accessed 6 January 2023].
- 6 Linda Clarke and Chris Wall, ‘Omitted from History: Women in the Building Trades’, in *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Construction History*, ed. by Malcolm Dunkeld, James W. P. Campbell, Hentie Louw, Michael Tutton, Bill Addis and Robert Thorne, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), I, pp. 35–59 (p. 54).
- 7 Christopher Powell, ‘“Widows and Others” on Bristol Building Sites: Some Women in Nineteenth-Century Construction’, *Local Historian*, 20, no. 2 (1990), pp. 84–87 (p. 84).
- 8 Shelley E. Roff, ‘“Appropriate to Her Sex”? Women’s Participation on the Construction Site in Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, in *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Theresa Earenfight (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 111, 109; Elizabeth C. Musgrave, ‘Women in the Male World of Work: The Building Industries of Eighteenth-Century Brittany’, *French History*, 7, no. 1 (1993), pp. 30–52 (p. 44).
- 9 See ‘A Directory of Dublin House Painters’, in Conor Lucey, ‘“Made in the New Taste”: Domestic Neoclassical Architecture and the Dublin Building Industry, 1765–1801’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Dublin, 2008), pp. 294–301. The names of women, including Mary Ford, Elizabeth Ledwich, Mary Ann Russell and Jane Tinkler, typically appear as widows.
- 10 Caroline Stanford, ‘Revisiting the Origins of Coade Stone’, *Georgian Group Journal*, 24 (2016), pp. 95–116.
- 11 Research by the present author on the building industries of eighteenth-century Britain, Ireland and America has appeared in Conor Lucey, *Building Reputations: Architecture and the Artisan, 1750–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Conor Lucey, ‘Specification for a House in Dominick Street’, *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, 21 (2018), pp. 96–107; Conor Lucey, ‘Owen Biddle and Philadelphia’s Real Estate Market, 1798–1806’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 75, no. 1 (2016), pp. 25–47; Conor Lucey, ‘The Developer, the Builder, His Contractors and Their Tradesmen’, *Proceedings of the First Conference of the Construction History Society*, ed. by James W. P. Campbell, Wendy Andrews, Nicholas Bill, Karey Draper, Patrick Fleming and Yiting Pan (Cambridge: Construction History Society, 2014), pp. 239–48.
- 12 Clarke and Wall, ‘Omitted from History’, p. 41.
- 13 Records for the Guild of the Blessed Virgin (carpenters, masons, millers and heliers) survive in partial and selective transcript only; those for the Guild of St Bartholomew (bricklayers and plasterers) are lost. See Mary Clark and Raymond Refaussé, eds, *Directory of Historic Dublin Guilds* (Dublin: Dublin Public Libraries, 1993).
- 14 Cliff Webb, *London Apprentices, Volume 34: Plaisterer’s Company 1698–1800* (London: Society of Genealogists, 2000). Webb identified thirty-eight daughters of citizens apprenticed to company members, although one (Ann Biddle) is described as a son and a further three (Hannah Ferrieres, Mary Nix and Sarah Rowland) were missed in his reckoning.

- 15 Cliff Webb, *London Apprentices, Volume 7: Glaziers' Company 1694–1800* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1997); Cliff Webb, *London Apprentices, Volume 2: Tylers' and Bricklayers' Company 1612–1644, 1668–1800* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1996); Cliff Webb, *London Apprentices, Volume 27: Masons' Company 1663–1805* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1999). The information presented in these books was abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb from the extensive archives of the livery companies held in the Guildhall Library, London.
- 16 Webb, *Plasterer's Company, passim*.
- 17 Webb, *Plasterer's Company*. On the broader topic, see Kyle T. Bulthuis, 'Work and Society', in *A Cultural History of Work in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 131–49 (p. 136).
- 18 Webb, *Plasterer's Company, passim*.
- 19 Clare Crowston, 'Women, Gender and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research', *International Review of Social History*, 53 (2008), pp. 19–44 (p. 19). Of the seventeen girls apprenticed to James Palmer, four were daughters of gentlemen, two of merchants, while the remainder included surgeon, victualler, gardener, upholsterer and 'esquire'.
- 20 Olive Jocelyn Dunlop, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 152–53.
- 21 Laura Gowing, *Ingenious Trade: Women and Work in Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 74.
- 22 Dunlop, *English Apprenticeship*, p. 154, citing E. B. Jupp, *An Historical Account of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters of the City of London*, 2nd edn (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1887), p. 544. This important aspect of Dunlop's account is omitted from Clarke and Wall's overview of women in the building trades, which draws from this source. Jupp described this instance (of a girl being bound to the trade of a company master's wife) as 'suggestive of an explanation of some of them'. Alice Clark noted similar examples of girls being apprenticed to members of the Carpenters' Company in order to learn the 'trade' of a housewife. Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919; repr. London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 175–76.
- 23 K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 270–319 (pp. 272, 291). Snell cited sources such as Dunlop and Jupp selectively, and took 'apprenticeship' to craft trades such as carpentry entirely at face value. For a similar conclusion, drawing on the same sources, see James Ayres, *Art, Artisans and Apprentices: Apprentice Painters and Sculptors in the Early Modern British Tradition* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), p. 71.
- 24 Snell, *Labouring Poor*, p. 296.
- 25 Amy Louise Erickson, 'Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies 1700–1750', *History Workshop Journal*, 71 (2011), pp. 147–72 (p. 151). Webb noted that, 'In early records, persons who belonged to a given Livery Company would generally practice [*sic*] the trade to which that Company referred, but after about 1650, it became more and more common (until in some companies virtually universal) that members practiced [*sic*] another trade altogether': Webb, *Plasterers' Company*, p. v. This was also true of Dublin: see Arthur Gibney, *The Building Site in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017), pp. 22–23.
- 26 Laura Gowing, 'Girls on Forms: Apprenticing Young Women in Seventeenth-Century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 55, no. 3 (2016), pp. 447–73 (p. 452). This raises questions about a recent account of women's involvement in the 'training of joinery apprentices', where the practice of girls being bound to both husband and wife was presented as a 'uniquely female circumstance': Charlotte Young, *Join Loyalty and Liberty: A History of the Worshipful Company of Joiners and Ceilers* (Stroud: Amberly, 2021), pp. 161–68.
- 27 Palmer is recorded as a 'haberdasher' or 'haberdasher and citizen and plaisterer of London': London, Guildhall Library [hereafter GL], MS 6122/4, *passim*.
- 28 GL, MS 6122/4, Plaisterers' Company, court minutes, 1761–93, f. 175. In January 1777, Ann, daughter of Edward Prince of Rotherhithe, Surrey, was apprenticed to William Sydenham, another haberdasher (f. 164).
- 29 GL, MS 6122/4, Plaisterers' Company, court minutes, 1761–93, f. 214. In 1733, Ann Lambert's apprenticeship to Mary Bignell recorded the 'Charity by the Merchant Taylor's Comp[any]': MS 6122/3, Plaisterers' Company, court minutes, 1698–1761, f. 230.
- 30 Webb, *Tylers' and Bricklayers' Company, passim*. On the admission of sempsters and milliners to the Carpenter's company, see Helen Smith, 'Gender and Material Culture in the Early Modern London

- Guilds', in *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600*, ed. by Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 16–31 (p. 18).
- 31 For girls generally, it seems that 'the line separating apprenticeship and domestic service was everything but clear': Anna Bellavitis, *Women's Work and Rights in Early Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 179.
- 32 This raises questions about the figures tabulated in Snell (*Labouring Poor*, pp. 278, 291), one of the principal sources cited in Clarke and Wall, 'Omitted from History', pp. 37–38. In fact, of the multiple secondary sources that Clarke and Wall cited for evidence of girls learning a building craft, only one, by M. Dorothy George, offers a specific example of an individual, named Rebecca Clark, who in 1741 was bound to a carpenter 'to be taught the art and mystery of a carpenter': Clarke and Wall, 'Omitted from History', p. 38, citing M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the XVIIIth Century* (London: Kegan Paul, 1925), pp. 234, p. 383, n. 57. But George's account, based on 'Sessions Papers, Guildhall Records, 1742', makes no reference to the terms of the indenture so this cannot be considered a reliable source.
- 33 Deborah Simonton, 'Apprenticeship: Training and Gender in Eighteenth-century England', in *Markets and Manufacture in Early Industrial Europe*, ed. by Maxine Berg (Routledge: London, 1991), pp. 227–58. See also, Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (Routledge: London, 1998), pp. 76–83; Gowing, *Ingenious Trade*, pp. 55–98.
- 34 Geoffrey Crossick, 'Past Masters: In Search of the Artisan in European History', in *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500–1900*, ed. by Geoffrey Crossick (Routledge: London, 1997), p. 13. See also Deborah Simonton, introduction, in *A Cultural History of Work in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Simonton and Montenach, pp. 12–13.
- 35 [Anon.], *A General Description of All Trades* (London: T. Waller, 1747); Joseph Collyer, *The Parent and Guardian's Directory, and the Youth's Guide, in the Choice of a Profession or Trade* (London: R. Griffiths, 1761). On the trades and skills that girls routinely learned and practised, see Gowing, *Ingenious Trade*, pp. 137–77. For Ireland, see Imelda Brophy, 'Women in the Workforce', in *The Gorgeous Mask: Dublin 1700–1850*, ed. by David Dickson (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1987), pp. 51–62.
- 36 Snell, *Labouring Poor*, p. 299.
- 37 Peter Earle, in 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review*, 42, no. 3 (1989), pp. 328–53, noted that 'it was unusual for husband and wife to work together at the same trade' (p. 338). See also Musgrave, 'Women in the Male World of Work', p. 42.
- 38 According to Janine Lanza, 'The way that wives and widows stepped into male roles suggest that they understood and could function in the workplace culture of the artisanal shop': Janine Lanza, 'Workplace Cultures', in *A Cultural History of Work in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Simonton and Montenach, pp. 77–94 (p. 86). Musgrave argues that 'The main task of the female builder, wife or widow, was to supply the workshop or enterprise with raw materials, to do the accounts and to merchandise finished goods, together with supervisory tasks and manifold household duties': Musgrave, 'Women in the Male World of Work', p. 34.
- 39 Trinity College Dublin [hereafter TCD], Muniments/P/2/47/20, 'Slaiting worke done on Trinity College', 23 June 1722. For Heatly, see Melanie Hayes, 'Wives, Widows and Mothers: Recovering Records of Women in the Early Eighteenth Century Building Trade', *Craftvalue* (2020) <craftvalue.org/wives-widows-and-mothers> [accessed 10 September 2020].
- 40 Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 16635B, Staffordshire architect's account book, f. 23r. I am grateful to Christine Casey for this reference. On the complex question of women's literacy in this period, see Earle, 'The Female Labour Market', pp. 334–36.
- 41 Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, 2 vols (London, 1727), I, pp. 291, 293. This forms part of an extended essay, 'Of the Tradesman Letting His Wife Be Acquainted with His Business'.
- 42 Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Frank Cass, 1969), p. 285. See also Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 284; Powell, "'Widows and Others'", p. 86. On widows providing building services for the London livery companies, including plumbing and painting, see Smith, 'Gender and Material Culture', p. 23. The toxic nature of building materials such as lime and lead may account for widows being 'over-represented in the historical records'. Ayres, *Art, Artisans and Apprentices*, p. 71.
- 43 Dublin, National Library of Ireland [hereafter NLI], MS 12125, Records of the Guild of St Luke, or Fraternity of Cutlers, Painters, Stainers and Stationers, vol. 5, 1766–85, p. 65 (4 July 1769).



- 44 Clark, *Working Life of Women*, pp. 188, 189; Musgrave, 'Women in the Male World of Work', pp. 34, 42–44.
- 45 *Dublin Evening Post*, 20 May 1779, p. 3. Her husband Moses had predeceased her in 1761.
- 46 *Bath Chronicle*, 5 December 1793, p. 3.
- 47 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 9 January 1809, p. 1. An earlier advertisement confirms that she continued her husband's trade 'in his absence' (*Leeds Intelligencer*, 7 January 1805, p. 3). Hannah Barker erroneously assumed Askin to have operated in her own capacity as a plumber/glazier: Barker, *Business of Women*, p. 80.
- 48 *Saunders's News-Letter*, 8 November 1787, p. 4.
- 49 Law supplied materials and labour for houses built by Nicholas Kildahl in Eccles Street and Marlborough Street, and for individual houses built by Edward Archdall and John Scott in Mountjoy Square: Dublin, National Archives of Ireland [hereafter NAI], Bryan Bolger papers, unsorted bundles K, M and P.
- 50 London, British Library, Chambers Add MS 41133, ff. 11–12. I am grateful to Christine Casey for this reference. For context, see John Harris, *Sir William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star* (London: Zwemmer, 1970), p. 214.
- 51 Ariadne Schmidt, Isabelle Devos and Bruno Blondé, 'Introduction. Single and the City: Men and Women Alone in North-Western European Towns since the Late Middle Ages', in *Single Life and the City, 1200–1900*, ed. by Julie De Groot, Isabelle Devos and Ariadne Schmidt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1–26 (p. 7).
- 52 *Saunders's News-Letter*, 16 November 1767, p. 1. Margaret and Samuel Reed are listed as 'city plumbers' in the *Dublin Directory* for the years 1771–73.
- 53 NAI, T.509, 'Extract from Will of Arthur Conolly of Barrack St Dublin Limeburner', 7 April 1808. On the broader topic, see Alistair Owens, 'Inheritance and the Life-cycle of Family Firms in the Early Industrial Revolution', *Business History*, 43, no. 3 (2002), pp. 21–46; Musgrave, 'Women and the Male World of Work', pp. 37, 38.
- 54 NLI, Bryan Bolger papers, 'Trinity College Dublin' bundle.
- 55 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 February 1793, p. 2. For Mary Simpson & Sons, see Barker, *Business of Women*, p. 101. The brothers had originally been in partnership with their father, John Simpson (*Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 January 1785, p. 2).
- 56 Helen Draper, 'Mary Beale and Art's Lost Laborers: Women Painter Stainers', *Early Modern Women*, 10, no. 1 (2015), pp. 141–51 (p. 141). Despite making this claim, Draper also acknowledged that mistresses 'often undertook quite different work in practice' from the trade guild to which they belonged (p. 149).
- 57 Ayres, *Georgian City*, p. 7. See also Guillery, 'The Further Adventures of Mary Lacy', p. 68. A recent study of house painting in nineteenth-century Scotland conflates the running of a business with the possession of a skilled trade: Nina Baker, 'Who Paints the House? Scotswomen as Housepainters and Decorators from 1820', in *Nuts and Bolts of Construction History: Culture, Technology and Society*, ed. by Robert Carvais, André Guillerme, Valérie Nègre and Joël Sakarovitch, 3 vols (Paris: Picard, 2012), II, pp. 53–62. I am grateful to Susan Galavan for this reference. A similar assumption is made in Alexandra Stevenson, 'Women Working in the Building Trades at Some of London's Royal Palaces in the 17th and 18th centuries', *Construction Historian*, 7 (2021), pp. 19–23.
- 58 Snell, *Labouring Poor*, p. 309.
- 59 W. H. Pyne, *The Microcosm or, a Picturesque Delineation of the Arts, Agriculture, Manufactures, & c. of Great Britain*, 2 vols (London: William Miller, 1803); William Darton, *Little Jack of All Trades* (London: Darton & Harvey, 1806). Neither women nor girls are represented in Pyne's plates illustrating related building occupations (lime kilns, brick kilns, slate quarries, masonry, statuary and paving), nor in Darton's plates for building trades (carpenter, mason and sawyer).
- 60 Collyer, *Parent and Guardian's Directory*, p. 176.
- 61 *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts* (London: J. Souter, 1818), pp. 60, 62. This is the only building trade book that includes references to women and girls. On the employment of family members in labour 'gangs', see Kathleen Ann Watt, 'Nineteenth Century Brickmaking Innovations in Britain: Building and Technological Change' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1990), p. 30; Ayres, *Georgian City*, pp. 102–03.
- 62 Edward Dobson, *A Rudimentary Treatise on the Manufacture of Bricks and Tiles*, part II (London: John Weale, 1850), pp. 23–24.
- 63 R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), p. 169 (Campbell states that brickmakers 'take no apprentices, they hire boys by the week, who learn the business as they grow up'); *A General Description*

- of *All Trades*, p. 38 (the author states that brickmakers 'take no apprentices, except now and then, perhaps, parish-children, boys').
- 64 Dublin, Registry of Deeds [hereafter RD], 188/491/126480, memorial of a deed of assignment, 26 November 1757. Sarah is described as widow and executrix of Edward Newman. See also Susan Roundtree, 'Brick in the Eighteenth-Century Dublin Town House', in *The Eighteenth-Century Dublin Town House*, ed. by Christine Casey (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 73–81 (p. 78).
- 65 GL, MS 3043-5, folio 3, 'The Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers, Minute Book 1711–1728', *passim*. Typically, the bricks were found to be smaller than the preferred size, the clay had been adulterated or the firing process had cut corners — common practices that were prohibited only briefly, between 1725 and 1730, when the company 'attempted to reassert its rights [...] to control the brick trade around London': see Linda Clarke, *Building Capitalism: Historical Change and the Labour Process in the Production of the Built Environment* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 95–100 (p. 100). Clarke and Wall, in 'Omitted from History', refer to Fish and Tunstall (p. 38), although they neglect to note that both continued family businesses in their capacity as widows.
- 66 *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (London: Royal Academy, 1786), p. 8.
- 67 For a contemporary description, see Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: Vol. 2* (London: George Woodfall, 1861–62), p. 166. A similar supporting role was recorded for gravel-diggers: see Pyne, *Microcosm*, plate IX.
- 68 Isabelle Baudino, 'Eighteenth-Century Images of Working Women', in *The Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carré and Cécile Révauger (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 173–82.
- 69 J. Pincot, *Pincot's Treatise on the Practical Part of Coach and House Painting* (London, 1811), pp. 11, 15–16, cited in Ian Bristow, *Interior House-Painting Colours and Technology, 1615–1840* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 107.
- 70 TCD, P/2/152–14, P/2/174–16. Similar references in P/2/165, P/2/173–39.
- 71 Donald Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 112–15. Writing about women's work in eighteenth-century Ireland, Mary Daly argues that status and payment differentials were predicated on 'relationships within the family, property rights and women's reproductive role': Mary Daly, *Women and Work in Ireland, Studies in Irish Economic and Social History 7* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1997), p. 4.
- 72 Rof, "'Appropriate to Her Sex'?", p. 113. Building records for Öster Malma in the 1660s, a manor located southwest of Stockholm, include references to four female 'lime stirrers' who 'carried lime back and forth on the construction site': Jonas Lindström, Rosemarie Fiebranz and Göran Rydén, 'The Diversity of Work', in *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, ed. by Maria Ågren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 24–56 (p. 24).
- 73 Pinchbeck, *Women Workers*, p. 280.
- 74 Deborah Valenze, *The First Industrial Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 184.
- 75 For Todderick's relationship to Dublin's plastering trade, see Conor Lucey, *The Stapleton Collection: Designs for the Irish Neoclassical Interior* (Tralee: Churchill House Press, 2007), pp. 12, 40. Margaret's husband Thomas had died on 30 March 1763, aged 63 years, and Margaret died on 1 March 1784, aged 64 years: Michael Egan, *Memorials of the Dead: Dublin City and County Graveyards, Vol. 9* (Dublin, 1996), p. 156.
- 76 *Hibernian Journal*, 19 August 1774, p. 1. The act is 13 & 14 Geo. III. c. 37. Although there is no listing for Margaret Todderick in trade directories of the period, her son Thomas (d. 1784), a carpenter, timber merchant and house-builder, is listed between 1773 and 1784 (the property identified as no. 5 Lime Street in 1775–76 and 1784, and as no. 9 in 1776–83). Margaret Todderick may have retired in 1780: an indenture, dated 22 April of that year, records the assignment of the Lime Street premises to Thomas. This further records the original transaction of the property, dated 16 May 1769, made between Matthew Slator, carpenter, and Margaret Todderick, widow (RD, 353/432/239864).
- 77 *Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland, Vol. IX — Part I: 1773–78* (Dublin: House of Commons, 1797), p. 201.
- 78 The bill was amended 'to prohibit the burning of Lime or Lime Stones in any Lime Kiln, which had not been erected before the 24th Day of March, 1772'.
- 79 *Freeman's Journal*, 28 July 1774, p. 2: 'Married. Mr. Michael Stapleton, to Miss Frances Todderick, of Lime-street.' See also Lucey, *Stapleton Collection*, p. 12.
- 80 See Musgrave, 'Women in the Male World of Work', p. 35.

- 81 *Hibernian Journal*, 18 March 1782, p. 4. An almost identical notice was posted in the *Dublin Evening Post* for 1 July 1788 (p. 1), suggesting a longstanding trade in selling this product.
- 82 Dunlop, *English Apprenticeship*, p. 149.
- 83 Roff, "'Appropriate to Her Sex'?", p. 110. While boys were customarily brought up to a working life, with girls 'it was more a question of informal apprenticeships in the duties and skills of the household, although at times these overlapped with work for the enterprise. Primarily, however, their efforts were directed to servicing the household and manpower of the enterprise': Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 281. See also Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, pp. 47–57; Smith, 'Gender and Material Culture', pp. 25–26.
- 84 Ayres, *Georgian City*, figs 92, 151.
- 85 Ayres, *Georgian City*, p. 93; figs 65, 95. For a summary (and critique) of the historical interpretations of women's contribution to the family economy, see Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 135–57.
- 86 Bernadette Whelan, preface, in *Women and Paid Work in Ireland, 1500–1930*, ed. by Bernadette Whelan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 9–12 (p. 11).
- 87 'People divided their time between different productive, distributive, managerial, and other tasks, and the extent to which they represent different "livelihoods" is a matter of definition. [...] It is against this backdrop that the division between what men did and what women did must be understood': Lindström, Fiebranz and Rydén, 'The Diversity of Work', p. 36.
- 88 McKellar, *Birth of Modern London*, pp. 41, 62–63, 128–29.
- 89 Juliet Learmouth, 'Living Amid the Royal Ruins: Women and Property in Eighteenth-Century Whitehall', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44, no. 4 (2021), pp. 361–81.
- 90 Henry Blackwood-Archdale, *Memoirs of the Archdales* (Enniskillen: Henry Blackwood-Archdale, 1925), pp. 26–27.
- 91 *Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland, Vol. VIII — Part I: 1765–72* (Dublin: House of Commons, 1797), p. 86.
- 92 *Dublin Journal*, 25 August 1767, p. 3.
- 93 The present No. 51 North Great George's Street was built by Sarah Archdall (née Spurling) before 1770 (RD, 283/579/187353, indenture, 26 December 1770). Nos 20/21 Great Denmark Street were originally a single property built on ground leased by Archdall to John Spurling, presumably a relative, in 1771 (RD, 303/81/200666, indenture, 20 November 1771). A later document, dated 20 December 1783, recites how that lease had been acquired by Spurling 'in trust for said Sarah Archdall', and 'that she afterwards built and erected a good dwelling house and offices thereon' (RD, deed of lease and release, 353/317/239218).
- 94 Kevin O'Rourke and Ben Polak, 'Property Transactions in Ireland, 1708–1988: An Introduction', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 21 (1994), pp. 58–71 (p. 62).
- 95 Geraint Franklin, *Ramsgate: The Town and its Seaside Heritage* (Swindon: Historic England, 2020), p. 47.
- 96 Franklin, *Ramsgate*, p. 47.
- 97 John Langton, 'Clayton, Sarah (1712–1779), Property Developer and Industrialist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/48911> [accessed 13 July 2021].
- 98 Stanley Harris, 'Sarah Clayton's Letter and John Wood of Bath', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 100 (1948), pp. 55–72 (p. 59); Elizabeth E. Barker and Alex Kidson, *Joseph Wright of Derby in Liverpool* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 136.
- 99 Joseph Sharples, *Liverpool* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 7, 186. On the fashionable status of Clayton Square, see Jane Longmore, 'Residential Patterns of the Liverpool Elite c. 1660–1800', in *Living in the City: Elites and their Residences, 1500–1900*, ed. by John Dunne and Paul Janssens (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 175–92 (p. 180).
- 100 Guillery, *Small House*, p. 232.
- 101 Finola O'Kane, *Landscape Design in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Mixing Foreign Trees with the Natives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004); Briony McDonagh, *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape, 1700–1830* (London: Routledge, 2018).
- 102 Eve McAulay, 'Some Problems in Building on the Fitzwilliam Estate During the Agency of Barbara Verschoyle', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, 2 (1999), pp. 98–117.
- 103 McAulay, 'Some Problems in Building', pp. 105–06, citing NAI, Pembroke Estate papers, 97/46/3.
- 104 *Saunders's News-letter*, 7 February 1793, p. 2. The relationship between Austin's advertised development and the present Marino Crescent at Clontarf, north County Dublin, remains unclear.

- 105 Laura Johnstone, 'Two Estates and Their Coastal Suburbs: The Design, Formation and Development of Nineteenth-Century Suburbs on the Longford de Vesci Estate in Dublin and Cork' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Dublin, 2019), p. 150; 'Township of Rathmines', *Dublin Builder*, 15 March 1861, p. 456, cited in Susan Galavan, *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850–1901* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 109.
- 106 David Barnett, *London, Hub of the Industrial Revolution: A Revisionary History 1775–1825* (London: I.B Tauris, 1998), p. 118. I am grateful to Lynne Walker for this reference.
- 107 Clarke and Wall, 'Omitted from History', p. 38.
- 108 Watt, 'Nineteenth Century Brickmaking Innovations in Britain', p. 57, citing *The Builder* (1843), p. 19. On the question of cultural attitudes to female labour, see Roff, "'Appropriate to Her Sex'", pp. 110–11; Ayres, *Art, Artisans and Apprentices*, p. 71.