Female investors in the first English and Welsh commercial joint-stock banks.*

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During the mid-1850s economic and financial observers noted that gentlemen, spinsters and widows comprised a substantial part of London joint-stock banks' proprietories. Indeed, a considerable number of these collectively significant shareholders were female.[1] Similarly, when the Northumberland & Durham District Bank failed in 1857, it was found that half of its shareholders were women.[2] Furthermore, those not indicating an income-generating occupation, including spinsters and widows, were prominent amongst the Liverpool Commercial Bank's shareholders when its management decided in 1861 that their institution

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1 *The Economist* (13 Mar. 1856), p. 290.

2 *Banker's Magazine* (1857), p. 540.

should become a limited company. Likewise, members of these social strata were significant subscribers to the shares of new limited banks formed on Merseyside during the mid-1860s.[3]

Bank shares acquired attractive qualities over the mid-nineteenth century for those seeking an apparently safe yet remunerative outlet for their savings. Unsound ventures promoted during the bank-creation ‘mania’ of the mid-1830s had been winnowed out, with 24 disappearing over the decade from 1834 due to either failure or, in some cases, amalgamation.[4] The number of joint-stock banks then stabilised at c.100. This was largely due to Peel’s introduction in 1844 of a stringent statutory code regulating new bank formations. Only a further 12 joint-stock banks were established during the ensuing 13 years, of which three were formed to operate overseas.[5] Existing domestic joint-stock institutions’ collective market position was further cemented by private banking’s continuing decline. The number of country banking houses in England and Wales contracted from 449 in 1830 to 266 in 1850,[6] while 13 private London banks also closed their doors, reducing their number to c.60.[7]

The growing dominance of banks established before 1844 was reflected in their dividend distributions to shareholders, an aspect further considered below. Profitability was assisted by the greater growth of deposits, facilitated by the introduction of a uniform 1*d*. stamp duty on cheques in 1853 that replaced ad valorem impost. These institutions’ full arrival on the banking scene came with the progressive admittance of London joint-stock banks to the Clearing House from 1854, and the setting up of a country clearing in 1858. Both

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3 B. L. Anderson and P. L. Cottrell, ‘Another Victorian capital market: A study of banking and bank investors on Merseyside’, *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 28 (1975), pp. 611-13

4 See P. L. Cottrell and Lucy Newton, ‘Banking liberalization in England and Wales, 1826-1844’, in R. Sylla, R. Tilly and G. Tortella (eds), *The state, the financial system and economic modernization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Table 4.1, p. 84, and pp. 97-8, 102.

5 See K. S. Toft, ‘A mid-nineteenth century at banking control’, *Revue internationale d’Histoire de la Banque*, 3 (1970).

6 M. Dawes and C. N. Ward-Perkins, *Country banks of England and Wales. Private provincial banks and bankers 1688-1953*, 1 (Canterbury: CIB Publishing for the Chartered Institute of Bankers, 2000), Table 2, pp. 11-12.

7 See P. L. Cottrell, ‘London private banks at the mid-nineteenth century’, in O. Feiertag and I. Lespinet (eds), *Festschrift for Alain Plessis* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne, forthcoming).

developments also substantially aided the greater use of cheques as a means of payment and, thereby, the further expansion of current accounts.[8]

Whatever the greater solidity, and profitability, of bank shares by the mid-century, their holders remained subject to a range of risks. The 1826 Banking Co-partnerships Act[9] had permitted joint-stock banks to be legally constituted only as unlimited companies - actually, large co-partneries with freely transferable shares. Furthermore, it became directors' practice to give depositors additional security through calling up only a fraction of the nominal value of their respective institution's shares.[10] The unqualified liability that shareholders assumed, unchanged by the legislation of 1844, went together with the contraction of the institutionalised secondary market in bank shares from the late 1830s. The number quoted on the London Stock Exchange had fallen by 1854 to 21, including Irish, Scottish and overseas institutions.[11] London quotations rose to merely 27 during the early 1860s.[12] The marked metropolitan decline of institutionalised domestic bank share trading was paralleled in the provinces. For instance, only nine banks were listed on the Liverpool exchange in 1860, and just two at Leeds.[13] In addition, English and Welsh joint-stock banks continued to fail, whether they had established before 1844 or constituted under the 1844 Joint Stock Banking Act's[14] onerous registration provisions – 22 in all between 1844 and 1861.[15]

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8 S. E. Thomas, *The rise and growth of joint stock banking*, I, *Britain to 1860* (London: Pitman, 1934), pp. 571-9.

9 7 Geo. IV, C. 46.

10 For contemporary views on the question of bank shareholders' liability, see T. Joplin, *An examination of the Report of the Joint Stock Bank Committee* (London: J. Ridgeway & Sons, 2nd ed. 1837), pp. 2-3; and J. W. Gilbart, *A practical treatise on banking* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1828), pp. 54, 56-61.

11 H. Ayres, *Fenn's Compendium of English and Foreign Funds* … (London: Effingham Wilson, 1855), p. 387.

12 P. L. Simmonds, *Fenn's Compendium* …(London: Effingham Wilson, 1863), p. 423.

13 See J. R. Killick and W. A. Thomas, 'The provincial stock exchanges, 1830-1870', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 23 (1970).

14 7 & 8 Vict., C. 113.

15 Drawn from Thomas, *The rise and growth,* Appendix M, pp. 656-62.

Despite their take up by gentlemen and women, bank shares carried considerable risks. These had been even greater when investing in joint-stock banks was a novelty - a step into the unknown. The following sections explore the extent to which females became shareholders as commercial joint-stock banking first developed within England and Wales. The discussion is based upon an analysis of the proprietories of 20 joint-stock banks established between 1827 and 1836. The data have been extracted from either deeds of settlement, the legal instruments that founded such banks, or share registers.[16] Unfortunately, some deeds of settlement merely indicate shareholders' genders, so restricting the extent to which the basis of female shareholders' income and wealth can be established. Yet, the composition of some banks' proprietaries can only be identified from deeds of settlement.

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16 Bank of Liverpool, 1831 – BBA: 310/152, share register;
Bank of Westmorland, 1833 and 1853 - HSBCGA: C12, share ledger, 1833-1880;
Barnsley Banking Co., 1831 and 1851 – HSBCGA: A4, share ledger, 1832-1896;
Birmingham & Midland Bank, 1836 and 1856 – HSBCGA: AA1 deed of settlement and share register;
Bradford Banking Co., 1827 – HSBCGA: B1 deed of settlement, 1 Jun. 1827;
County of Gloucestershire Banking Co, 1836 – LTSBA: Book no. 1954, deed of settlement, 26 Jul. 1836;
Coventry Union Banking Co., 1836 – HSBCGA: HSBCGA: AB2, deed of settlement, 6 May 1836;
Coventry & Warwickshire Banking Co., 1835 – LTSBA: File no. 7013, deed of settlement, 1835;
Cumberland Union Banking Co., 1829 – HSBCGA: G1, deed of settlement, 1829;
Halifax & Huddersfield Union Banking Co., 1836 – LTSBA: File no. 5924, deed of settlement, 1 Jul. 1836;
Halifax Joint Stock Bank, 1829 – LTSBA: 5354, deed of settlement, 1829;
Huddersfield Banking Co., 1827 and 1847 – HSBCGA: H24, share register and transfer book, 1827-1890;
Liverpool Union Banking Co., 1835 – LTSBA: book no. 3544, Proprietors' ledger No. 1, 1835-47;
London Joint Stock Bank, 1836 – HSBCGA: ***xxx***, share ledger, vol. 1;
North & South Wales Bank, 1836 – HSBCGA: M132, Proprietors' stock ledger;
Sheffield & Hallamshire Banking Co., 1836 – HSBCGA: AM48, list of share transfers;
Sheffield & Rotherham Banking Co., 1836 and 1863 – RBSA: SR/79, deed of settlement, 1 Jul. 1836 and SR/147014000, Register of proprietors, 1863-1899;
Swaledale & Wensleydale Banking Co., 1836 and 1856 – BBA: 388/705, Share register;
Wilts & Dorset Banking Co., 1836 and 1853 – LTSBA: Book number 3177, Shareholders' register, 1835-53; and
Yorkshire Banking Co. 1844 and 1864 – HSBCGA: X49, Representatives' register.

For an authorative guide to bank archives, see J. Orbell and A. Turton, *British banking. A guide to historical records* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), which supersedes L. S. Pressnell and J. Orbell, *A guide to the historical records of British banking* (Aldershot: Gower, 1985).

Section I discusses the make up of the sample of banks employed for analysis, whereas section II considers the magnitude of female subscriptions to bank promotions. The focus moves forward in time by some 20 years in section III, which reviews whether female shareholders became more numerous as joint-stock banks developed to be more proven institutions. Our findings, which indicate greater female share ownership at this later date, are extended through two contrasting case studies of the Huddersfield Banking Co. and the 'Hull Bank'. The general context of investment opportunities at the mid-century for women (and also for those who styled themselves 'gentlemen') is outlined in section IV. There are strong indications that increasing female participation in mature joint-stock banks was paralleled in the cases of successful early railway companies and gas companies. Finally, our results are considered in a wider perspective in section V through placing them alongside the conclusions of investigations of female investment in Consols, 1810 to 1840 and in the first limited companies. We suggest that women, in particular spinsters and widows, were generally more prepared to invest in shares as the associated risks became apparently more calculable with the passage of time.

I

Female subscriptions to shares of the newly promoted joint-stock banks within our sample are displayed in tables 1 and 2.[17] The results have been divided between banks formed before 1834 (table 1), and thereafter (table 2), for a number of contextual reasons. Banks set up prior to 1834 were groundbreaking institutions, with some formed almost immediately in the wake of the 1826 Act's passage despite depressed business conditions. The Huddersfield Banking Co. was the first Yorkshire joint-stock bank and became a model for subsequent northern formations. Furthermore, Thomas Joplin, the energetic campaigner for the introduction of joint stock banking into England and Wales, played a role in establishing not only the Huddersfield Banking Co. but also the Bradford Banking Co. and the Cumberland Union Bank.[18] All, as was to be the subsequent general pattern of organisation, were unit banks,

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17 The number of subscriptions (or shareholdings) in each bank and those of women ranged from 92 original shareholders (8 women) in the case of the Bradford Banking Co. in 1827 to 1,212 original shareholders (197 women) in the case of the Bank of Liverpool in 1831. The number of shareholders in the other banks lies between these two 'limiting' figures.

18 There is no biography of Joplin, but see S. Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of national biography*, 30 (London: Smith, Elder, 1892), pp. 191-2; and F. Watt, rev. I. S. Black, 'Joplin, Thomas (c.1790-1847), banker and author', in *Oxford Dictionary of National*

with the exception of the Huddersfield Banking Co., the management of which precociously opened three branches soon after its promotion. The earliest joint-stock banks generally had relatively small paid-up capitals - £17,500 in the case of Halifax Joint Stock Bank, £20,000 in the cases of both the Bradford and Cumberland Union, and comparably, £25,000, with respect to the Barnsley Banking Co.

Table 1: ***Subscriptions to bank shares, 1827-33***

	Bradford B.Co.	Hudder-sfield B. Co.	Cumb-rland Union B.Co.	Halifax J.S. Bank	Barnsley B. Co.	Bank of Liver-pool	Bank of Westmor-land	Aver-age
	1827	1827	1829	1829	1831	1831	1833	1827-33
Number of female share-holders as a % of all share-holders	8.7 %	8.4%	12.7%	1.7%	5.3%	16.2 %	2.2%	7.9%
Value of shares held by women as a % of the aggregate value of shares subscribed	7.9%	4.1%	6.7%	1.6%	5.3%	10.4 %	1.6%	5.4%
Average value of women's share-holdings	£193.75	£74.9	£56.96	£87.5	£5.9	£264.01	£16.88	£99.9
Average value of all share-holdings	£214.57	£153.04	£108.12	£95.96	£10.42	£411.45	£61.10	£150.66

Biography (London: OUP, 2004) – http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15117 [accessed 20 Oct. 2004].

In turn, the Bradford Banking Co. acted as the model for establishing the York City & County Bank during spring 1830. See C. Bailey, Provincial banking in nineteenth century England: York City & County Banking Co., 1830-1880, Ph. D. thesis (University of Leicester, 2003), p. 24

Table 2: ***Subscriptions to bank shares, 1835-6***

	Coventry & Warwicks B. Co. 1835	Liver-pool Union B. Co. 1835	Birming-ham & Midland 1836	County of Glouc. B. Co. 1836	Coventry Union B. Co. 1836	Halifax & Hudders-field Union B. Co. 1836	London J. S. Bank 1836
Number of female shareholders as a % of all shareholders	10.9%	7.1%	2.6%	11%	8.7%	3.8%	3.2%
Value of shares held by women as a % of the aggregate value of shares subscribed	5.5%	4.0%	1.9%	2.5%	4.7%	1.6%	1.7%
Average value of women's shareholdings	£41.88	£275	£45	£176.92	£108.7	£111.67	£172.7
Average value of all shareholdings	£82.41	£498	£61.82	£777.94	£200.48	£272.85	£318.7

Table 2 continued: ***Subscriptions to bank shares, 1835-6***

	North & South Wales Bank 1836	Sheffield & Hallam-shire B. C. 1836	Sheffield & Rotherham B. Co. 1836	Swaledale & Wensley-dale B. Co. 1836	Wilts & Dorset B. Co. 1836	Average 1835-6
Number of female shareholders as a % of all shareholders	7.4%	3.4%	9.8%	9.4%	10.3%	7.3%
Value of shares held by women as a % of the aggregate value of shares subscribed	4.9%	2.3%	5.0%	2.2%	6.2%	3.5%
Average value of women's shareholdings	£19.57	£69.2	£575.78	£28.57	£91.3	£143.02
Average value of all shareholdings	£29.56	£100.8	£1,172.17	£123.37	£144.27	£315.19

In all this, attempting to found a joint-stock bank during the late 1820s and early 1830s was innovative.[19] For instance, following the publication of a prospectus in March 1827, calls on the Huddersfield Banking Co.'s £10 shares began on 1 June at £1 per share but its promoters continued to accept share applications through 1828. Further calls were made on existing shareholders and on those taking up shares for the first time - 10*s*. on 2 August 1827 and 10*s*. on 6 February 1828.[20] To attract subscriptions and justify calls, the promoters pointed, albeit possibly selectively, to the experience of investors in an Aberdonian provincial banking company established during the late 1780s; its £150 shares were trading at £2,200 during 1826.[21]

Joint-stock bank promotions averaged four a year over the period 1826-1832. Prospects for further creations were then threatened by the increasing possibility that the government would introduce legislation permitting only the establishment of chartered banks while closely specifying the business to be undertaken.[22] The likelihood of the statutory imposition of a stringent regulatory code was sufficient to halt the formation of the Hull, East Riding & North Lincolnshire Banking Co. in April 1833.

The government's legislative intentions only finally became clear during February and March 1834. Despite a wide-ranging debate from 1830, no major changes were made to the 1826 Act; rather, clauses were solely introduced into the bill renewing the Bank of England's charter, passed in August 1833. These permitted joint-stock deposit banks to operate within the metropolitan area (65-mile radius of Charing Cross), and allowed provincial joint-stock

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19 For the promotion of the Bradford, see W. F. Crick and J. E. Wadsworth, *A hundred years of joint stock banking* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936, 3rd ed. 1958), p. 204 and W. C. E. Hartley, *Banking in Yorkshire* (Clapham: Dalesman, 1975); for the Huddersfield, Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 204 and Hartley, *Banking in Yorkshire*; for the Cumberland Union, Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 115; for the Halifax, R. S. Sayers, *Lloyds Bank in the history of English banking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 17 and H. Ling Roth, *The genesis of banking in Halifax* (Halifax: F. King & Sons, 1914); for the Barnsley, Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 215; for the Liverpool, G. Chandler, *Four centuries of banking*, I, *The grasshopper and the liver bird Liverpool and London* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1964), pp. 236-9; and for the Westmorland, Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 134.

20 HSBCGA: H 24, Huddersfield Banking Co., Share register and transfer book, 1827-

21 HSBCGA: H41/18, Huddersfield Banking Co., *Prospectus* (9 Mar. 1827). For context, see C. W. Munn, *The Scottish provincial banking companies 1747-1864* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1981).

22 See Bailey, Provincial banking in nineteenth century England, pp. 27-8.

banks to draw bills on London with a value of less than £50 and a maturity shorter than six-months.[23] With the removal of the prospect of a radically different statutory basis for joint-stock bank formations coupled with the development of a boom, the rate of creations quickened to an average of ten a year, 1833-1835, and culminated in a 'promotion mania' during 1836, when 59 were established.[24]

Over the mid-1830s, founders of further new joint-stock banks were able to capitalise upon the successes of the first English and Welsh institutions – in 1833 dividends of between six to 10 per cent and share price premiums ranging from 20 to 80 per cent and, by 1836, dividends of between 6½ and 12½ per cent and premiums of five to 66 per cent.[25]

The banks in our sample of post-1834 creations (table 2), include three conversions of private houses (Coventry & Warwickshire Banking Co., Huddersfield Union and Sheffield & Rotherham Banking Co.), a 'district' bank (Wilts & Dorset Banking Co.), and a metropolitan joint-stock deposit bank (London Joint Stock Bank).[26] The setting up of 'district' banks had

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[23] See Cottrell and Newton, 'Banking liberalization in England and Wales', pp. 85-7.

[24] See R. C. O. Matthews, *A study in trade-cycle history. Economic fluctuation in Great Britain 1833-1842* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), pp. 159-64; and Cottrell and Newton, 'Banking liberalization in England and Wales', pp. 84, 96-102.

[25] RBSA: 574, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Banking Co., Board of Directors minutes, 8 Nov. 1833; LTSBA: Liverpool Union Banking Co., Book No. 93, Board of Directors minutes, AGM, 3 Jan. 1836; and, for the prospectus of the North Wilts Banking Co., Mar. 1836, see Sayers, *Lloyds Bank*, p. 159 fn2.

[26] For the promotion of Coventry & Warwickshire, see Sayers, *Lloyds Bank*, p. 19; for Liverpool Union, see Sayers, *Lloyds Bank*, pp. 20, 51, 281; for Birmingham & Midland, see Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 55, and A. R. Holmes and Edwin Green, *Midland 150 years of banking business* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1986), pp. 15-22; for County of Gloucestershire, see Sayers, *Lloyds Bank*, pp.18, 280; for Coventry Union, see Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, pp. 85, 87ff; for Halifax & Huddersfield Union, see Sayers, *Lloyds Bank*, p. 17 and Roth, *Genesis of banking in Halifax*; for London Joint Stock, see Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 279; for North & South Wales, see Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. 176; for Sheffield & Hallamshire, see Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, p. p. 202 and L. Newton, 'Regional bank-industry relations during the mid-nineteenth century: links between bankers and manufacturers, c. 1850 to c. 1855', *Business History*, July 1996, pp. 64-83; and for Sheffield & Rotherham, see [Anon], 'Ironmaster and duke's agent: the Sheffield & Rotherham Bank', *Three Banks Review*, 73 (1967), reprinted in [Anon], *Williams Deacon's 1771-1970* (Manchester: William Deacon's Bank Limited, 1971), and Newton, 'Regional bank-industry relations'.

begun with the Manchester & Liverpool District Bank in 1829,[27] and marked the beginnings of joint-stock branch banking albeit primarily at a regional level. A further eight 'district' banks, including Wilts & Dorset, were established during the mid-1830s. However, three failed between 1836 and 1843 to increase English joint-stock bankers' general initial aversion to branching beyond a bank's immediate business area.[28] The presence of six Lancashire or Yorkshire banks in our sample – Halifax & Huddersfield Union, Liverpool Union, North & South Wales (Liverpool-based), Sheffield & Hallamshire, Sheffield & Rotherham and Swaledale & Wensleydale – reflects the geographical focus of bank promotions undertaken during the mid-1830s.[29]

If our sample has a bias, it arises from all its 20 banks being successful institutions in terms of surviving until each successively became a constituent of one of the 'Big Five' of the post-1918 era.

II

Despite very different contexts to their respective creations, the extent of female participation in joint-stock banks formed both before and after 1834 was broadly the same (see tables 1 and 2). Overall, women numbered less than one in ten amongst subscribers to the shares issued by the various banks established before 1834 in our sample. There are variations with females being one in eight among the first shareholders of the Cumberland Union while falling as low as less than two in a 100 in the case of the Halifax Joint Stock Bank. Their place amongst those who took up the shares of banks subsequently founded during the mid-1830s was comparable. Females were even less significant in terms of the monetary value (paid-up capital) of their collective holdings.[30]

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27 See W. D. Jones, 'Instant banking in the 1830's: the founding of the Northern and Central Bank of England', *Bankers' Magazine*, 211 (1971); and idem, 'The Manchester cotton magnates' move into banking, 1826-50', *Textile History*, 9 (1978).

28 Cottrell and Newton, 'Banking liberalization in England and Wales', pp. 98-9, 102; and idem, 'Joint-stock banking in the English provinces 1826-1857: To branch or not to branch?', *Business and Economic History*, 27 (1998).

29 *The Circular to Bankers* (May 1836), pp. 330-1.

30 These findings are very similar to those of Carlos and Neal in their examination of women holders of Bank of England stock between 1720 and 1725. They found that women who actively traded Bank shares owned 10.8% of the capital stock in 1720 and 14.5% in 1725. Widows and spinster were dominant amongst these shareholders,

These findings are mirrored in female subscribers' participation in terms of the average value of their holdings (by paid-up capital). Furthermore, the value of the average female holding was two-thirds of the average value of all shareholdings with respect to both banks formed before, and after, 1834.[31] The picture of female share stakes given by the sample is not changed when data for the Yorkshire Banking Co. are included. This 'district' bank had been established in 1834 but fraud forced its reconstruction in 1843/4. In 1844 women comprised 13.4 per cent of its shareholders, and held collectively 7.6 per cent of the shares by value. The average female holding in terms of paid-up capital was then £40.6, while the average value of all shareholdings was £70.7.[32]

These findings should be not taken as direct indicators of females being in the main either reluctant, or timid, subscribers during the early development of joint-stock banking within England and Wales. Rather, they reflect that, generally, the new banking was pursued by local commercial and industrial groups to meet their own credit needs, especially with the swathe of country banking houses that had been cut down during the 1825/6 crisis. Promoters frequently took great care to ensure that shares were allotted to those who would likely bolster an embryonic institution's future business. This may have led to some discrimination against females. For instance, the Bank of Liverpool's founders received applications for 18,000 shares but only approved the allotment of 15,638, although this left 9,362 un-issued.[33] The practice continued into the mid-1830s, with the Coventry Union Banking Co.'s manager required by his directors to list all applications from Coventry residents and to 'make inquiries as will afford information … to enable them to allot shares to such parties as are most likely to promote the interests of the company'.[34] Choosing

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as in this sample (see below). See Ann M. Carlos and Larry Neal, 'Women investors in early capital markets, 1720-1725', *Financial History Review* 11.2 (2004).

31 Holdings by value, whether overall or solely those of women, were positively skewed in their distribution for all banks, the respective median values being less than those of the averages.

32 HSBCGA: X49, Representatives' register.

33 BBA: 38/5557, Bank of Liverpool, Board of directors minutes, vol. 1, 17 Mar. 1831.

34 HSBCGA: AB3, Coventry Union Banking Co., Board of directors minutes, 13 May 1836. In the case of the Halifax & Huddersfield Union Bank, its deed of settlement laid down that '5,000 shares were to be reserved for the further distribution at which premium the directors might decide and for the general benefit of the said company' – LTSBA: file no. 7013, deed of settlement, 1 Jul. 1836.

precisely who would be shareholders also extended in some instances to directors' approval of share transfers being required two decades after their initial issue.[35]

The national promotion of joint-stock banks came more to the fore during the mid-1830s, especially with the creation of 'district' banks. In the case of Wilts & Dorset Banking Co., 53 per cent of its initially subscribed capital was drawn from its business area and adjacent counties (Dorset and Wiltshire together with Devon, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Somerset), whereas subscribers resident in Lancashire supplied 20 per cent. The balance came from subscribers living in Cumberland (8.06 per cent), Yorkshire (7.82 per cent) and Westmorland (4.39 per cent), along with six other English counties, Ireland and Scotland.[36] In the euphoria of the bank creation 'mania' of 1836, promoters may have been somewhat less concerned about who became shareholders. In the case of the Wilts & Dorset Banking Co., the largest proportion - 48 per cent – of its female shareholders lived in Cumberland, a county at some considerable distance from the area in which the bank was physically located. Most of its other women shareholders resided within the immediate area of the bank's activities - 26 per cent in Wiltshire, 8.4 per cent in Dorset, eight per cent in Somerset and three per cent in Hampshire.[37]

Some female traders and manufacturers are present in the proprietories of the banks in our sample when shareholders' occupations can be firmly established (see table 3). The ways that these various individuals gained a living represents in large part the typical involvement of women in business during the late 1820s and the ensuing decade. Acquiring a stake in a joint-stock bank may, in a number of cases, have improved these female subscribers' access to credit since some managements subsequently gave preference to shareholders'

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35 See, for example, HSBCGA: B6, Bradford Banking Co., board of directors minutes, 25 May 1846 with respect to the William Turley's attempt to sell 10 shares to William Wilkinson. The directors wanted to be assured about the 'circumstances and character' of the proposed purchaser.

36 Cottrell and Newton, 'Banking liberalization in England and Wales', pp. 99-102.

37 LTSBA: Wilts & Dorset Banking Co., Book number 3177, Shareholders' register, 1835-53. The majority of all shareholders, including women, tended to come from the areas in which the banks operated. See L. A. Newton, *Assessment of information, uncertainty and risk: the strategies of English and Welsh joint-stock bank managements, 1826-1860*, University of Reading Business School Discussion Paper, No. 431 (2001).

applications for banking facilities. A study of the lending activity of 12 early joint-stock banks found that between ten and 62 per cent of total applications for credit (per bank) were made by their respective shareholders during the first three years of business. In terms of approved applications, an average of 29 per cent of total lending per bank was extended to proprietors. The possession of shares could clearly be a key for receiving credit from a bank, although its significance declined over time.[38]

Table 3: ***Occupations of female shareholders, by percentage of total value of all female holdings for each bank, 1827-1844.***

	Bank of Liverpool 1831	Bank of Westmorland 1833	Barnsley B. Co. 1831	Birmingham & Midland 1836	Bradford B. Co. 1827	County of Gloucestersh. 1836
Female, unsp.	0.6%		57.7%	33.3%	12.9%	
Spinster	55.2%	55.6%	3.8%	38.9%	32.3%	51.1%
Gentlewomen			23.1%			
Wife	1.2%		15.4%		32.3%	
Widow	40.0%	44.4%				27.2%
subtotal	***97.0%***	***100.0%***	***99.3***	***72.2%***	***77.5%***	***78.3%***
Executor						
Bookseller						
Draper						
Dressmaker					3.2	
Furrier	0.1%					
Hotel Keeper						21.7%
Inn Keeper			1.8%			
Merchant	0.5%					
Metal manufct.				13.9%		
Milner	0.1%					
Painter					6.5%	
Pawnbroker	0.1%					
Printer						
Schoolmistress	2.1%					
Shoe Maker				5.6%		
Varnish manufct.				8.3%		
Victualler					12.9%	

38 See Newton, *Assessment of information, uncertainty and risk.*

Table 3(continued): ***Occupations of female shareholders, by percentage of total value of all female holdings for each bank, 1827-1844***

	Coventry & Warwicks. B. Co. 1835	Coventry Union B. Co. 1836	Cumberland Union B. Co 1829	Halifax & Huddersfield Union B. Co 1836	Halifax JS Bank 1829	Huddersfield B. Co. 1827
Female, unsp.					64.3%	9.0%
Spinster	62.7%	48.0%	77.9%	67.2%		54.3%
Gentlewomen		3.0%				
Wife						
Widow	37.5%	34.0%	14.5%	26.9%		28.0%
subtotal	***100.0%***	***85.0%***	***92.45***	***94.1%***	***64.3%***	***91.3%***
Executor		5.0%				2.2%
Bookseller			3.8%			6.5%
Draper			3.8%		28.6%	
Dressmaker				1.5%		
Furrier						
Hotel Keeper						
Inn Keeper				3.0%		
Merchant						
Metal manufct.						
Milner				1.5%		
Painter					7.1%	
Pawnbroker						
Printer		10.0%				
Schoolmistress						
Shoe Maker						
Varnish manufct.						
Victualler						

Table 3(continued): ***Occupations of female shareholders, by percentage of total value of all female holdings for each bank, 1827-1844***

	Liverpool Union B. Co. 1835	London JS Bank 1836	North & South Wales Bank 1836	Sheffield & Hallam-shire B. Co. 1836	Sheffield & Rother-ham B. Co. 1836	Swaledale & Wensley-dale B. Co. 1836	Wilts & Dorset B. Co. 1836	Yorks. B. Co. 1844
Female, unsp.	32.5%	23.2%	41.2%		3.4%	10.4%	3.4%	40.1%
Spinster	27.9%	54.6%	52.9%	74.8%	39.5%		48.8%	31.2%
Gentlewomen						87.5%		
Wife		20.3%	3.8%					
Widow	30.5%	1.9%	0.9%	4.1%	51.7%		43.8%	19.9%
subtotal	*90.9%*	*100.0%*	*98.8%*	*78.9%*	*94.6%*	*97.9%*	*96.0%*	*91.2%*
Case maker				11.2%	2.7%		1.0%	
Clothier								
Confectioner								
Currier			0.2%					
Draper								1.4%
Dressmaker				10.0%				
Hair stuffing manufacturer					2.7%			
Inn Keeper	1.3%					2.1%	1.9%	1.2%
Ironmonger	2.6%							
Merchant								
Fruit	2.6%							
Silk								6.2%
Milner							0.2%	
Victualler								

When females were significant subscribers of initial bank equity, they were, by and large, those without a stated income-generating occupation, being ‘gentlewomen’ or spinsters or wives or widows. However, it should be noted that the findings in table 3 with regard to eight banks - Birmingham & Midland, County of Gloucestershire, Coventry Union, Coventry & Warwickshire, Cumberland Union, Halifax & Huddersfield Union, Halifax Joint Stock and Sheffield & Rotherham – are derived from their respective deed of settlement which leads in some cases to only the gender of shareholders being given, as opposed to gender and occupation. Nonetheless, with the then legal position of married women’s assets,[39] wives merely feature in the proprietaries of five banks out of 18 for which the necessary information is available, while collectively they contributed very little capital. This coincides with the very minor role of wives’ investments in early English railway companies so that, for instance, only 12 appear in the 1837 list of London & Birmingham shareholders.[40]

How married women might exceptionally hold shares during the closing years of Georgian England is indicated in the Huddersfield Banking Co.’s share transfer book. William Dickinson of Holmfirth held in trust the five shares of Mrs Mary Kilner of Huddersfield. Mary Law of Cleckheaton had subscribed for 15 shares when she was a spinster, but it was carefully noted in the transfer book that she had subsequently married to become Mrs Mary

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39 Women lost their property rights on marriage until 1870. However, the 1870 Act prevented married women owning partly paid shares in their own names, a characteristic security of joint-stock banks. This exclusion persisted until the 1882 Married Women’s Property Act. It was possible for a wife’s property to be held in trust before 1882, which could protect some, or all, of her property from her husband’s, the assets in question often having been given by a father to his daughter. It was thus possible for women to own property under common law and, consequently, to have capital and income, and the ability to pass these assets to their children. Widows could also use settlements to protect resources inherited from one marriage when entering another. See R. J. Morris, ‘Men, women and property’, in F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), *Landowners, capitalists and entrepreneurs: essays for Sir John Habakkuk* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 171-191; and Janette Rutterford and Josephine Maltby, ‘Frank must marry money: men, women and property in Trollope’s novels’ (forthcoming). Others argue that trusts and settlements did little to protect a wife’s property since it was common to make a husband the trustee. See Susan Moller Okin, ‘Patriarchy and married women’s property in England: questions and some current views’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17 (1983-4); and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes* (London: Routledge, 1987).

40 M. C. Reed, *Investment in railways in Britain, 1820-1844. A study in the development of the capital market* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 109 fn2, 116.

Holdsworth. Such assiduousness on the part of the book's compilers over the marriage of female shareholders continued for many decades to the extent that, during the early 1870s, Betsy Sarah Hirst's marriage certificate was bound into the ledger. Lastly, with regard to these illustrative examples, during 1827 when the bank was being established, Mrs Mary Leigh subscribed for 10 shares, which she held jointly with a husband, John William, but these were entered in the names of their trustees – Thomas Marshall of Almondbury and George Hobson of Honely.[41] More generally, some banks in their respective prospectus made it plain that subscriptions from wives, together with those of bankers and minors, would not be accepted.[42]

The ways that 'unoccupied' females became shareholders is difficult to determine. One possibility is that they were filially related to the males either establishing a bank or amongst its first shareholders. With regard to the Bank of Westmorland's initial shareholders, five women had the same surname as one of its directors – Harrison – but several men also shared this name.[43] In the case of the Bank of Liverpool, 11 females have the same surnames as the men who signed its deed of settlement, but this is a tenuous connection, the more so when the surname 'Brown' is involved and weakened further by the number of 'Wilsons' who were shareholders. However, even this questionable approach to an explanation cannot be suggestive with regard to the bank's two major female shareholders: Elizabeth Margaret Colquhoun, an Edinburgh spinster who had holding of £2,175, and Martha Coglan, a Liverpudlian widow with a stake of £9,575.[44]

Greater certainty can come with somewhat unusual surnames so that there are stronger grounds for linking the holding of 30 shares in the Barnsley Banking Co. of Florence and

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41 Although bank officers were clearly aware of the legal status of wives' property, many did not realise the almost insuperable problems caused for their respective institution should a member of the clergy be one of its shareholders. See Thomas, *The rise and growth*, pp. 240-1. As the result of an Act passed in 1817 (75 Geo. III, c. 99), a joint-stock bank that had a clergyman among its shareholders could not legally recover any of its debts, while the whole of its equity was forfeit, half to the Crown and half to the individual who sued it under the legislation. Although the York City & County Banking Co. declined a share application from the Vicar of Tadcaster, this was solely because its share issue had been oversubscribed. See Bailey, Provincial banking in nineteenth century England, p. 92.

42 HSBCGA: B42/3, Bradford Banking Co., *Prospectus*, 22 Mar. 1827, clause 8.

43 HSBCGA: C12, Bank of Westmorland, share ledger, 1833-1880.

44 BBA: Bank of Liverpool, deed of settlement, 1831, 25/624(1).

Mary Cordeaux with those of Thomas Scales Cordeaux and John Cordeaux, jnr., both Barnsley linen merchants, who had 20 shares each. Fragile filial webs can be partly spun in the case of the Coventry & Warwickshire Banking Co. with respect to the holdings of the Becks, Cashes and Harrises; with regard to Mary Spencer as a shareholder in the Cumberland Union Banking Co.; with total certainty in respect to the female Rawsons as their holdings had arisen from the conversion of the family's private house into the Halifax & Huddersfield Union Bank; and very temptingly with Louisa Stooks as a likely relation of Thomas Stooks, an initial director of London Joint Stock Bank. It would be far too dangerous to go further with linking female and male holdings that share surnames, although the instinct is to surmise a filial connection.

A feature of female subscriptions to the shares of banks being founded was that of siblings acting together. A number of examples will illustrate this. Mary and Agnes Hodgson, spinsters of Liverpool made investments of £1,775 and £1,525, respectively, in the Bank of Liverpool. Similarly, Amelia and Jane Horsfall of the Ladies Academy, Wakefield, each acquired 10 shares of the Barnsley Banking Co. Three spinsters - Celia, Harriet and Mary Long – of Haresfield were amongst the first shareholders of the County of Gloucestershire Banking Co. Likewise, two spinsters having the surname Lister took up shares of the Halifax & Huddersfield Union Bank. Elizabeth, Isabella and Margaret Other, 'gentlewomen' of Elm House, Leyburn, were likely related to Christopher Other of Wensley, one of the Swaledale & Wensleydale Banking Co.'s first directors. However, the same connection cannot be put forward regarding the holdings of Martha, Margaret and Eleanor Cowling of Richmond, Yorkshire, although they may have been related to John Cowling, a shoemaker who resided in the same town.

III

Although in most cases women were not major subscribers to joint-stock banks' initial capitals from the late 1820s through to the mid-1830s, contemporary commentary points to females having a general greater presence by the mid-century. This is confirmed with regard to the nine banks in our sample for which information is available regarding their proprietories 20 years after their respective establishment. By then they had become proven institutions.

The data are displayed in table 4.[45] With regard to London Joint Stock Bank, our results support *The Economist*'s observation in 1856 that females comprised a large number of the shareholders of the metropolitan joint-stock deposit banks – in its particular case nearly one in three, who collectively had a stake of 17.4 per cent in this institution's capital. As during the late 1820s and the mid-1830s, the number of female shareholders at the mid-century varied from joint-stock bank to joint-stock bank, arising in part from the particular circumstances of both their respective promotions and subsequent development. Nonetheless, female participation in bank equity had generally increased.

By the mid-century the average number of female shareholdings per bank had risen to 16 per cent of all holdings from seven to eight per cent when the institutions were being promoted two decades before. Similarly, the average collective stake of female shareholders, by value in terms of paid-up capital, had increased to 11 per cent from three to five per cent. These developments are pointed up by the size of the average female holding rising to £290. Generally, our findings point to the size of individual stakes in joint-stock banks increasing as these institutions became more established, with average female holdings following this trend.[46]

The information from our sample of nine banks, obtained for various years between 1847 and 1864, conforms to contemporary commentary, and to historians' analyses of the composition of the shareholders of Merseyside banks during the 1860s with regard to both established institutions and new promotions. Females were becoming more prominent as shareholders by the mid-century, and particularly in the case of London joint-stock banks.[47]

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45 For Birmingham & Midland, see also Holmes and Green, *Midland*, Appendix 3, p. 327.

46 As when the banks in our sample were being established, holdings by value, whether overall or solely those of women, continued to be positively skewed in their distributions for nearly all banks, the respective median values being less than those of the averages. The one exception is female shareholdings in the Huddersfield Banking Co. in 1847, for which the median - £150 – is significantly greater than the average, indicating negative skewness.

47 When analysing shareholders of the Ulster Banking Co. between 1868 and 1879, Hickson and Turner found that spinsters made up 19.7% of total investors and widows 10.6%. However, it should be noted that this bank in Northern Ireland had a very different organisation, with a specific history and different context to its English counterparts. C. R. Hickson and J. D. Turner, 'The trading of unlimited liability bank shares: the Bagehot Hypothesis', *Journal of Economic History*, 63 (2003), p. 946.

Table 4: ***Subscriptions to bank shares, 1847-1864***

	Huddersfield B. Co. 1847	Barnsley B. Co. 1851	Bank of Westmorland 1853	Wilts & Dorset B. Co. 1853	London Joint Stock Bank 1856	Swaledale & Wensleydale B. Co. 1856
Female shareholdings as a % of all shareholdings	17.1%	8.8%	10.3%	13.6%	30.3%	21.1%
Value of shares held by women as a % of the aggregate value of shares subscribed	10.3%	7.3%	23.3%	10.0%	17.4%	11.5%
Average value of women's shareholdings	£10	£525	£121.76	£199.10	£379.5	£188.55
Average value of all shareholdings	£440.06	£464.71	£167.92	£271.70	£660.0	£321.44

Table 4 continued: ***Subscriptions to bank shares, 1847-1864***

	Swaledale & Wensleydale B. Co. 1856	Sheffield & Rotherham B. Co. 1856	Birmingham & Midland 1859	Yorkshire B. Co. 1864	Average
Female shareholdings as a % of all shareholdings	21.1%	7.9%	15.32%	20.2%	16.07%
Value of shares held by women as a % of the aggregate value of shares subscribed	11.5%	3.0%	6.76%	11.8%	11.26%
Average value of women's shareholdings	£188.55	£139.43	£591.76	£461.43	£290.7
Average value of all shareholdings	£321.44	£367.86	£1,482.52	£663.90	£537.79

Table 5: ***Occupations of female shareholders, by percentage of total value of all female holdings for each bank, 1851-1864***

	Bank of Westmorland	Barnsley B. Co.	Birmingham & Midland	Huddersfield B. Co.	London JS Bank
	1853	1851	1859	1847	1856
Female, unspecified	74.9%	78.6%	18.4%	2.7%	10.9%
Spinster	5.8%		4.1%	41.0%	48.0%
Aristocracy					3.1%
Gentlewomen	2.4%				
Wife		5.4%	3.5%	10.1%	1.2%
Widow	16.9%	14.3%	74.1%	43.4%	34.8%
subtotal	*100.0%*	*98.3%*	*100.0%*	*97.2%*	*98.0%*
Joint Executor with male					1.5%
Bookseller				1.5%	
Draper				1.1%	
Drug broker					0.3%
Inn Keeper		1.8%			
Ironmonger					
Merchant					
Oil				0.2%	
Wool				0.4%	
Milner					

Table 5 continued: ***Occupations of female shareholders, by percentage of total value of all female holdings for each bank, 1851-1864 (cont)***

	Sheffield & Rotherham B. Co.	Swaledale & Wensleydale B. Co.	Wilts & Dorset B. Co.	Yorkshire B. Co.
	1856	1856	1853	1864
Female, unspecified	3.3%		12.4%	10.5%
Spinster	59.8%	9.8%	45.2%	55.3%
Aristocracy				
Gentlewomen		87.6%		
Wife	1.6%	2.1%		
Widow	35.2%		42.4%	32.8%
subtotal	*99.9%*		*100.0%*	*98.6%*
Joint Executor with male				
Bookseller				
Draper				
Drug broker				
Inn Keeper		0.4%		
Ironmonger				
Merchant				
Oil				
Wool				
Milner				1.4%

It has to be borne in mind that our sample for the mid-century comprises solely nine banks, albeit that the data are drawn from share transfer books giving occupations. This material indicates that female shareholders by the mid-century were overwhelmingly those without stated income-generating employment. A few wives do once more feature but the principal suppliers of female capital in these institutions 20 years after their respective foundations were spinsters and widows when marital status is known – the only exception being ‘gentlewomen’ in the case of the Swaledale & Wensleydale. Our findings (see table 5) are ‘fogged’ to a degree by a lack of specificity with regard to female data for the Bank of Westmorland and Barnsley Banking Co., although this problem is somewhat comparable to that presented by the numerous ‘gentlemen’ who feature in the various types of available shareholder returns before the late nineteenth century.

Two questions arise. How had more females become bank shareholders by the mid-century? And why? One possibility is inheritance, but the records available within bank historic archives do not readily allow the tracing of all bequests from initial shareholders to members of their families and other legatees. There is some limited evidence that women inherited from their husbands; for instance, amongst the Barnsley Banking Co.’s proprietors, Samuel Hirst held five shares in 1831, whereas by 1851 he was no longer listed in the register but Hannah Hirst of the same address owned five shares.[48] There are several other such examples but it would be unwise to infer too much. Apart from intergenerational and inter-spouse transfers, there is the possibility of purchases through either some form of secondary market, *pace* the post-mid-1830s general contraction of trading in bank shares on stock exchanges, or the acquisition of shares when banks subsequently raised further equity capital.[49]

The changing composition of the Huddersfield Banking Co.’s proprietary may be instructive. Out of the 267 original subscribers during 1827 and 1828, 107 continued to be shareholders until 1847. The share transfer book indicates at least 11 original holdings subsequently

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48 HSBCGA: A4, Barnsley Banking Co., share ledger, 1832-1896.

49 In a further attempt to explain why women invested in early joint-stock banks some correlations were calculated, but these are of limited use due to our sample’s small size.

Correlation between paid-up capital per bank and percentage of women’s investment (by value): 3.4;

between the average value of women’s shareholdings per bank and the percentage of women’s investment: 0.19; and

between the number of shareholders per bank and the percentage of women’s investment: -0.32.

bequeathed to others who remained shareholders until 1847. The bank had 178 shareholders in 1847, amongst whom 60 had acquired their shares after 1828. However, further share issues in 1833 and 1841, together with returns of capital, complicates in many ways the determination of how new shareholders acquired their holdings after 1828. In August 1834, £3 per share was repaid to all shareholders, thereby reducing the amount called on each to £17. The second new share issue of 1841 also involved a call on their holders in January 1842, resulting in ultimately £10 being paid up on these particular shares. However, the board decided in August 1845 to reconstruct the institution’s equity, having concluded that its capital was ‘more than ample’. Consequently, the directors made a call of £10 per share but of which £5 was employed to finance a bonus of £7 per share, to give the bank a paid-up capital of £140,000, being £10 called on each share.

Amongst the Huddersfield Banking Co.’s 60 proprietors who acquired shares after 1828 and were still shareholders in 1847, 38 were female. Their collective stake amounted to 1,482 shares, 10.58 per cent of those issued, with an average holding of 39 shares. Women shareholders who were executors numbered six, with the estates for which they were acting having in total 265 shares. Some other female holdings also arose from legally constituted trusts: two marriage settlements (355 shares) and one unspecified trust (5 shares). Otherwise, there were three private arrangements, each apparently unrelated to any formal legal device: a wife with 30 shares in her own name; a wife holding 113 shares jointly with her husband; and a wife having 20 shares that had been explicitly transferred to her by her husband.

Apart from shares in the process of intergenerational transfer and those held in trusts or otherwise, the major groupings of female shareholders consisted of either spinsters (13, collectively holding 253 shares), or widows (ten, collectively holding 151 shares). As far as can be determined, the respective holdings of those who comprised these two particular groups of females were not related to any stakes of the bank’s original shareholders, by either transfer within families or other intergenerational bequests. However, there is the possibility that they could be linked to shareholders who acquired shares after 1828 but had disposed of them before 1847. If that possibility was not the case, then the take up of these 404 shares collectively by spinsters and widows represents a thickening of a trend of bank share acquisition by females without a stated occupational-generated income. They may have been acquired by either applications on the part of females to the new share issues of 1833 and 1841, or through private transfers.

Data from the proprietor’s ledger of the Hull Banking Co. (a rather intractable source and so not included in our sample), may indicate one ‘limiting’ case by pointing to why women, and others, might not have acquired shares of a local joint-stock bank, either upon its foundation or subsequently.[50] As with the Huddersfield Banking Co., raising the initial capital of the ‘Hull Bank’, as it became known, took some time - four years - from when the project was conceived during early 1833. Over this period, three calls on shareholders were made - in autumn 1833, March 1834 and March 1835 – raising £15 4*s*. per share in all. At the outset, the promoters would appear to have aimed at allotting shares in substantial blocks, initially parcels of at least 50 and, then, of 100, although they were unable to achieve this objective. Nonetheless, it constituted something of an apparent bar to all but the wealthy within the local community becoming initial shareholders. Even greater reluctance to subscribe may have caused by the suspension of the bank’s launch in May 1833 because of the general uncertainty over the government’s legislative intentions, which also led to the shareholders deciding two months later to dissolve the company. The bank was only firmly established once it had finally become clear that the government was not to introduce a strict regulatory code. Its first office was opened in December 1833.

After this ‘start-stop-start’ beginning, the Hull Bank became an early regional ‘brancher’, as had been originally intended. Again, like the development of the Huddersfield Banking Co.’s equity, the Hull Bank’s directors decided in autumn 1836 to return £5 per share. In its case, this was due to an unsuccessful competitive struggle with the Lincoln & Lindsey Banking Co., of which one aspect was the failure to gain agreement over the mutual acceptance of notes. The management’s inability to sustain effectively the north Lincolnshire offices was rapidly followed by a major borrowing client’s collapse, which sparked a substantial run. Although this was overcome, it forced the bank’s reorganisation, involving a further call for capital and the contraction of its network from 14 offices to just four.[51]

The Hull Bank’s chequered early years would appear to be reflected in the development of its proprietary. It had 263 initial shareholders over the years 1833 to 1836, of whom merely seven were females. Amongst them, Mary Ross on her marriage transferred her holding to her husband, Mark Cask, while Mary Scoffin gained her stake sometime after 1836 from Captain William Scoffin, master of a Hull whaler. By 1853, the bank had only 93

50 HSBCGA: J29, Hull Banking Co., Proprietor’s ledger No. 1.

51 Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, pp. 209-11.

shareholders, including two females who had been original subscribers. Amongst the merely 15 who had taken up a holding after 1836, there were only two females.[52]

IV

There is an inevitable tension between attempting to portray general trends from samples and also putting forward particular case study evidence. Since most early joint-stock banks were promoted locally, their respective establishments could be regarded as unique, each the particular product of a neighbourhood's economy and its related social structure. Some 'models' for emulation emerged, as with the Huddersfield Banking Co., whereas the nature of formations changed as private houses were converted and bank shares became a speculative counter with the eruption of the creation 'mania' in 1836, when even the chances of an allotment of shares were traded.[53] Nonetheless, the findings from our sample agree with contemporary comment that females collectively were becoming more important as bank shareholders by the mid-century. Some general 'push' and 'pull' forces can be identified to account for women's increasing take-up of bank shares as the years passed, during which joint-stock banks became firmly established.

Emphasis was given to dividends in this paper's introduction. The profitability to shareholders of some of the banks in our sample during the mid-1840s is displayed in table 6, and during the mid-1850s in table 7. In 1844, only the North & Wales Bank was distributing a dividend of less than five per cent, actually its first for some years as it had been badly affected by the 1836 crisis, resulting in losses of £54,000, equivalent to a third of its paid-up capital.[54] By 1844 the London Joint Stock Bank was also paying a six-per-cent dividend and had been for two years.[55] If share prices are an indicator of future prospects,[56] then the shares

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52 Conversely, the York City & County Banking Co., far more successful in its early years, had only one female shareholder when it was formed in spring 1830 but thereafter they became more numerous. See Bailey, Provincial banking in nineteenth century, p. 22.

53 A. D. Gayer, W. W. Rostow and A. J. Schwartz, *The growth and fluctuation of the British economy 1790-1850*, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 379; and Cottrell and Newton, 'Banking liberalization in England and Wales', p. 97.

54 See Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, pp. 180-2.

55 See Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, *Growth and fluctuation*, pp. 448, 450.

56 Unfortunately the share price index complied by Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz does not include provincial joint-stock banks. Its banking component comprises initially:

of only two of the 14 banks in our sample for which the necessary information is available were trading at a discount during 1844: North & South Wales, a further reflection of its woes, and Sheffield & Hallamshire, possibly a 'contagious' consequence of the suspension of the Sheffield private bank, Parker, Shore & Co. in January 1843 and of the Yorkshire District Bank four months later.[57]

Table 6: *Bank shares: prices and dividends, 1844*

Bank	**Share price £**	**Capital paid up per share £**	**Dividend %**
Bank of Liverpool	£23 15*s*.	£12 10*s*.	10%
Barnsley Banking Co.	£19-20	£15	8%
Birmingham & Midland Bank	£6-15	£5	8%
Bradford Banking Co.	£60	£30	12.5%
County of Gloucestershire Banking Co.	£26	£25	5%
Coventry Union Banking Co.	'About par'	£6 5*s*.	5%
Cumberland Union Banking Co.	£40	£20	10%
Halifax Joint Stock Bank	£15	£15	5%
Halifax & Huddersfield Union Banking Co.	£15	£10	'20*s*. per share'
Huddersfield Banking Co.	£24	£10	12.5%
Liverpool Union Banking Co.	£11 15*s*.	£10	8%
London Joint Stock Bank	£14	£10	6%
North & South Wales Bank	£7	£10	4%
Sheffield & Hallamshire Banking Co.	£3 10*s*.	£4	7.5%
Swaledale & Wensleydale Banking Co.	-	£5	10%

Source: *Bankers Almanac* (1845).

Provincial Bank of Ireland, National Bank of Ireland and Royal Bank of Scotland, to which is subsequently added: National Provincial Bank of England, London & Westminster Bank and London Joint Stock Bank. See Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, *Growth and fluctuation*, pp. 439-50.

57 See Crick and Wadsworth, *Hundred years*, pp. 215-17.

Table 7: *Bank shares: dividends, 1854*

Bank	**Capital paid up per share £**	**Dividend %**
Bank of Liverpool	£12 10*s*.	8%, and 12*s* 6*d* per share bonus for 1853-4
Bank of Westmorland	£10	18%
Barnsley Banking Co.	£15	8%, and 2% bonus for 1854
Birmingham & Midland Bank	£50	£5 per share [10%]
Bradford Banking Co.	£15	12.5%
County of Gloucestershire Banking Co.	£25	6%
Coventry Union Banking Co.	£6 5*s*.	5%
Cumberland Union Banking Co.	£30	£41 per share
Halifax Joint Stock Bank	£15	8.5%, or £20 per share
Halifax & Huddersfield Union Banking Co.	£10	'20*s*. per share'
Huddersfield Banking Co.	£10	10%
Liverpool Union Banking Co.	£10	6%, and 6*s*. bonus per share
London Joint Stock Bank	£10	10%
North & South Wales Bank	£7 10*s*.	6%
Sheffield & Hallamshire Banking Co.	£25	7.5%, and 1.5% bonus
Swaledale & Wensleydale Banking Co.	£5	8%, and 2% bonus
Wilts & Dorset Banking Co.	£10	6%
Yorkshire Banking Co.	£10 10*s*.	6%

Source: *Bankers Almanac* (1855).

Unfortunately the data available for 1854 does not include share prices, only paid-up capital per share and dividends distributed. No bank was then paying less than five per cent, whereas

North & South Wales Bank was distributing six per cent, the Bank of Westmorland as much as 18 per cent and the Cumberland Union £41 on each of its shares. The Huddersfield Banking Co.'s dividend had decreased from 12.5 to ten per cent but, although some other banks had also cut their dividends, a number of bank proprietories were benefiting from the payment of bonuses. Sustained rising dividend records were also becoming established; the Birmingham & Midland, for example, paid eight per cent from 1839, nine per cent in 1845, ten per cent from 1846 (except for 1851, when the dividend fell back to nine per cent), 12 per cent in 1855, 14 per cent in 1856, 15 per cent in 1857 and 16 per cent from 1858 (until 1864, when it rose to 18 per cent).[58]

The greater readiness of females to invest in maturing joint-stock banks parallels Reed's findings with respect to early railway companies. He found noteworthy increases over time in women shareholders' importance, particularly in the cases of the Stockton & Darlington from 1823 to 1844, the Newcastle & Carlisle from 1825 to 1844 and the Great Northern of England from 1836 to 1845. More generally, he concluded that women, as with those who styled themselves 'gentlemen', gained greater significance as shareholders a decade or so after a company had been formed, while being most prevalent in concerns deemed to be established and so low risk. Concurrently, female investors learnt from their experiences of holding shares so that some came to invest in a number of companies, as with Lydia Ann Sherwood, who had added to her 1837 stake in the London & Birmingham with at least shareholdings in the Liverpool & Manchester and the Grand Junction by 1845.[59] An increase in female shareholdings also occurred in some north western gas companies, albeit that they raised far smaller capitals than railway companies. In the case of five with respect to the years 1818 to 1822, females not indicating an income-generating occupation held 4.4 per cent of their total shareholdings. By the period 1836 to 1860 and with regard to 11 companies, the proportion of such females had risen to seven per cent.[60]

The collapse of the mid-1840s 'railway mania' caused a significant change in investor sentiment to the extent that many of the provincial stock exchanges established during the

58 Holmes and Edwin Green, *Midland*, Appendix 4.1, p. 331.

59 Reed, *Investment in railways*, pp. 192, 202-3, 204, 209.

60 J. F. Wilson, *Lighting the town: a study of the North Western gas industry, 1805-1880* (London: Paul Chapman for British Gas plc North Western, 1991), pp. 87, 106, 107.

1830s and 1840s became moribund, with consequences also for trading in bank shares.[61] As just ten English railway companies were distributing a dividend of more than five per cent during the mid-1850s, the 'blind' investor was generally only prepared to subscribe to new issues of preference shares and debentures, securities with guaranteed returns.[62] This represented a 'push' away from ordinary railway equity, while possibly increasing the attraction - the 'pull' - of bank shares, particularly in the cases of gentlemen and females. The allure of another almost directly competing investment outlet – insurance company shares – had equally faded since merely 53 of the 291 life companies projected between 1844 and 1851 were still in business in 1852/3.[63]

Pushed away from ordinary railway shares and the equity of life insurance companies, gentlemen and female rentier investors during the 1850s were also confronted by falling returns on traditional placements for their savings. One apparently informed authority estimated the then return on land at three per cent, on a first mortgage at four per cent and on ground rents at 4.5 per cent.[64] Furthermore, despite some fresh issues of Consols to finance Britain's participation in the Crimean War, the yield on these securities had fallen to 3.4 per cent by the mid-1850s. Within a few further years, the amount available was to be steadily reduced through Gladstone and his successors as Chancellor of the Exchequer employing the 'Old Sinking Fund' to amortise the National Debt - from £790.5m. in 1859 to £723.5m. in 1874.[65]

The investment quandary of the mid-1850s for some was significant enough to be a called a 'social problem', arising from attempting to maintain a way of life on the returns obtainable

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61 For the experience of provincial share markets, see W. A. Thomas, *The provincial stock exchanges* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), Chpt. 2: 'The railway share market in the provinces'.

62 See P. L. Cottrell, 'Railway finance and the crisis of 1866: contractor's bills of exchange and the finance companies', *Journal of Transport History*, 2nd ser., 3 (1975), p. 21.

63 J. Hooper Hartwell, *A letter to the Rt. Hon. E. Cardwell, M. P. …* (1853), p. 6.

64 R. A. Ward, *A treatise on investments* (London: 2nd ed., 1852), pp. 6, 61, 209.

65 See P. L. Cottrell, 'Domestic finance, 1860-1914', in R. Floud and P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge economic history of modern Britain,* II, *Economic maturity, 1860-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 257.

on a capital of £2,000-£3,000.[66] One solution came with the secular increase in the issue of foreign securities from the mid-1850s.[67] Another was the consequence of the total liberalisation of British company law between 1855 and 1862. In this process, the provisions of the 1844 Joint Stock Banking Act were largely swept way in 1857, the only retentions of Peel's regulatory code being a minimum share denomination of £100 and unlimited liability for shareholders. Banks with limited liability could be established from 1858.[68] These wholesale changes in company law, codified in 1862, set the context for a new epoch in the development of British commercial banking. In the subsequent stream of limited company formations, banks with other financial institutions featured prominently during the promotion booms of the mid-1860s and early 1870s. New limited banks were first put before the investing public in September 1861, and their promoters frequently pointed to the dividends that bank shareholders had enjoyed over the 1850s, particularly those with stakes in London joint-stock deposit banks.[69]

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Females became more prominent as shareholders in the first domestic commercial joint-stock banks over the period from 1827 to 1864, especially once these institutions had demonstrated some permanency. At the same time, they also became shareholders of some significance in the first railway companies. Although the extent of female participation varied between individual banks and companies, their involvement had a rising trend over time. These female investors were in large part spinsters and widows; the almost total absence of wives being a direct consequence of the legal status of married women's property before the legislation of 1870 and 1883.

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66 See An Anglo-American, *American securities* (London: Mann Nephews, 2nd ed. 1860), p. 13.

67 A. H. Imlah, *Economic elements in the Pax Britanica* (New York: Russell & Russell, 2nd ed., 1969), pp. 72-3.

68 P. L. Cottrell, *Industrial finance 1830-1914* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 52-3.

69 Anderson and Cottrell, 'Another Victorian capital market', p. 604; and P. L. Cottrell, 'Credit, morals and sunspots: the financial boom of the 1860s and trade cycle theory', in P. L. Cottrell and D. E. Moggridge (eds), *Money and power* (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 46.

Green and Owens have recently highlighted the extent of unmarried mature women within the British population in 1851, some 1.75m., comprising nine per cent.[70] Amongst them were spinsters who from their late thirties were unlikely to find a marriage partner, and widows. They also point out that many of those with gentry or middle-class backgrounds were possibly to endure increasing absolute, or relative, material distress during their later lives. Nonetheless, they also put forward data derived from the 1851 census pointing to a group of some 117,000 women resident in England and Wales who indicated an independent source of income, corroborated in part by women constituting 28 per cent of those who left wills in 1858. The presence of spinsters and widows of some substance provides a context for them, or least some of them, being investors in the widening ranging financial securities that were becoming available, as with bank and railway shares from the mid- and late 1820s. The analysis by Green and Owens of London women who died in 1830 with estates of less than £10,000 indicates that shares along with bank deposits featured in 12 out of 280 wills, while government securities (76 wills) followed cash (136).

Investments in the 'funds', in Consols, were highly marketable while providing a regular, quarterly income. The analysis by Green and Owens of women's ownership of these particular securities would appear to show that it increased from 34.7 per cent in 1810 to 47.2 per cent in 1840. However, their findings are not drawn from the stock ledgers but from a partial source, the Bank of England will registers. They acknowledge many of the difficulties involved when using this restricted window for a view of investment in a substantial proportion of the National Debt, of which one is that it excludes institutional ownership, an increasing important component during the first half of the nineteenth century as banking and life insurance further expanded. Beyond the question of were all wills proved, there is the overriding problem that the will registers can give only a sample of personal ownership of long-term government securities and, above all, a very particular one – that of the recently deceased. The exact extent of female participation in investment in 'the funds' during the first half of the nineteenth century will only become clear once the monotonous and time-consuming task of at least sampling the stock ledgers has been undertaken.[71]

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70 David R. Green and Alastair Owens, 'Gentlewomanly capitalism? Spinsters, widows, and wealth holding in England and Wales, c. 1800-1860', *Economic History Review*, 56, 2003.

71 Sampling of the East India Company's stock ledgers reveals that the share held by females rose from a nadir of 7.5% in 1774 to 10.3% in 1807 and 16.1% in 1830. The average size of female holding was £1,161 in 1807 and £1,615 in 1830. The stock gave a fixed annual return of 10½% on its nominal value and was highly marketable, so closely analogous to Consols. See H. V. Bowen, *The business of empire: the East*

When taking the findings of Green and Owens as just a pointer, something of a sketch begins to emerge of women investors, overwhelmingly a relatively small, changing group of spinsters and widows, who had resources and were becoming increasingly accustomed to making financial investments, beginning with 'the funds'. As other financial securities became available, some diversified their security holdings to include bank and railway equity. However, these securities were not closely analogous to Consols, and their take-up by women represented, knowingly or unknowingly, the acceptance of much higher levels of risk, while frequently, and especially in the case of bank shares before 1836, they were only issued locally. Our findings regarding the shares of the first joint-stock banks and those of Reed with respect to the first railway companies point to women being generally aware of the risks entailed since, collectively, they only became more prominent shareholders in these undertakings once they had become profitable, on-going concerns.

The understandable cautious attitude of women investors to new financial securities was displayed again following the liberalisation of company law. In both 1860 and 1885, female shareholders without a stated income-generating occupation held collectively only three per cent of the aggregate called-up capital of a ten per sample of newly registered limited companies. This was with respect to ordinary shares since the issue of preference shares did not become widespread until the 1890s. Their prudence was well founded. Following the previous practice of banks and railway companies, the first limited companies tended to have shares of a large denomination on which only a fraction was called up, to create the problem of what was called 'unlimited limited liability' in the mid-1860s.[72] Furthermore, most of the early limited liability companies that were successfully established (about one in three of those registered), then only had brief lives, three years or so.[73]

This overall picture for England and Wales is confirmed by regional studies. In the case of 86 limited companies established in Sheffield between 1855 and 1885, females without a stated

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India Company and imperial Britain, 1756-1833 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chpt. 4. We are grateful to Dr. Bowen for allowing us to read proofs of his forthcoming monograph.

72 Cottrell, *Industrial finance*, pp. 58, 96.

73 H. A. Shannon, 'The first five thousand limited companies and their duration', *Economic History* [supplement to *The Economic Journal*], 2 (1930-3); and idem, 'The limited companies of 1866 and 1883', *Economic History Review*, 4 (1932-3).

income-generating occupation supplied only three per cent of their aggregate paid-up capital. However, this hides some increasing willingness on the part of women to invest in these companies. Whereas they only accounted collectively for 0.4 per cent of capital subscribed until 1869, during the years 1870 to 1885 their share rose to 4.5 per cent.[74] Similarly, the wealth of women without a stated income-generating income was almost entirely absent in the equities of 189 Liverpool steamship concerns established as limited companies between 1856 and 1881, whether they operated a fleet of vessels or were 'single ship' enterprises.[75]

Women of some wealth who controlled their means, predominantly spinsters and widows, participated to a degree in the new corporate capitalism as it further developed from the 1820s. This group was not numerous and nearly all of its members appear to have been well aware of the risks involved. Consequently, most delayed their involvement until new opportunities, such as bank shares, were more proven investments. It was not just of a question 'of shares may go down as well as up' but also of entirely novel ventures; and commercial bank shares before 1858 lacked the safeguard of limited liability. Nonetheless, this positive conclusion has to be qualified to an unknown degree since the extent to which spinsters and widows in early Victorian England were able to make individual untrammelled financial decisions cannot be established.

74 Lucy Newton, The finance of industry in the Sheffield region, 1850-1885, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Leicester, 1994), p. 228.

75 P. L. Cottrell, 'The steamship on the Mersey, 1815-80: investment and ownership', in P. L. Cottrell and D. H. Aldcroft, *Shipping, trade and commerce* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), p. 155