CHURCHILL'S MAVERICK MP

The Forgotten Life of Mavis Tate (1893–1947)

By way of explanation…

The idea for writing a book on Frome's wartime, MP Mavis Tate came to Dave Lassman and myself in the latter part of 2018 and was originally to be part of a series of articles on Frome and its history until it emerged that there was far more to explore with regard to the life of this remarkable woman and that it deserved a serious biography. The more we researched the more fascinating our subject became.

Over time we both became involved in other work and the 'Mavis Tate Project' was set aside as the sheer volume of research involved became quite daunting and dragged on for far too long, It is now time that it reached the wider public before it becomes buried and forgotten.

It is unfortunate that the book has yet to make it into print, but it is certainly a story worthy of a larger audience (all offers of publication gratefully and seriously considered !!)

Mick Davis Frome August 2026

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Introduction

History has never been particularly kind to those who occupy the middle ground. It readily celebrates the great leaders whose names become synonymous with an age, while quietly forgetting the men and women who, although lacking the highest office, nevertheless helped to shape the world around them. Parliament has produced countless such figures—hard-working, independent-minded Members whose influence extended far beyond the boundaries of their constituencies, but whose stories have slowly faded from public memory. Mavis Tate was one of them.

Today, few people recognise her name. She has no statue in Parliament Square, no television documentaries recount her achievements, nor does she feature prominently in most histories of wartime Britain. Yet during one of the most turbulent periods in British history she was an energetic parliamentarian, a fearless campaigner, an outspoken critic of appeasement, a passionate advocate for women's rights, and one of Winston Churchill's most loyal supporters. She possessed the rare quality of political independence; prepared to support her party when she believed it right, but equally willing to challenge ministers, officials and even colleagues whenever conscience demanded. In an age when women in Parliament could still be counted in dozens rather than hundreds, she established herself as a politician of determination, intelligence and remarkable courage.

Her life was, however, about far more than politics.

Born in 1893 on the remote Atlantic island of St Helena, one of Britain's most isolated imperial possessions, Mavis entered a world shaped by privilege, empire and long-established family tradition. Descended from a family whose fortunes were closely intertwined with the East India Company and later imperial administration, she enjoyed advantages unavailable to most of her contemporaries. Yet privilege did not necessarily bring happiness. Behind the respectable façade lay personal disappointments, failed relationships and tragedies which profoundly influenced the woman she would become. Throughout her life there existed a fascinating contrast between outward confidence and private vulnerability, between public success and personal sorrow.

Perhaps it was these experiences that helped create the determination which characterised her political career. At a time when many still regarded women as unsuited to public office, Mavis Tate steadily forged a reputation for independent thought and practical reform. She refused to become merely another obedient party voice. Instead, she immersed herself in the issues that affected ordinary people: housing, industrial conditions, widows' pensions, equal pay, factory welfare, compensation, child welfare and countless other matters which rarely dominated newspaper headlines but fundamentally shaped everyday life.

Her greatest political test came during the years immediately preceding the Second World War. Like Churchill himself, she watched developments in Germany with increasing alarm while many politicians still clung to the hope that peace could be preserved through concession. She travelled, observed, questioned and drew her own conclusions. Her opposition to fascism was neither fashionable nor convenient; it arose from conviction rather than political calculation. Those convictions would remain steadfast throughout the war years as Britain fought for survival.

Yet reducing Mavis Tate to a wartime Conservative MP would do her a considerable injustice. She belonged to that small but growing generation of women determined to redefine what female public service could mean. Long before equal opportunities became part of everyday political language, she argued persistently for equal pay and fair treatment for women, often encountering resistance from men who considered such ideas unrealistic or unnecessary. She demonstrated that political influence was measured not merely by ministerial office but by persistence, careful research, persuasive argument and an unwavering refusal to abandon causes that others regarded as hopeless.

Her parliamentary career also reveals something of the changing nature of Britain itself. Through her story we glimpse the final decades of the British Empire, the lingering influence of aristocratic society, the emergence of women into national politics, the tensions surrounding appeasement, the realities of wartime government and the difficult transition to the post-war world. Her life intersected with many of the defining events and personalities of the twentieth century, yet she remained unmistakably herself—spirited, compassionate, occasionally unconventional and often ahead of her time.

The title of this book deliberately describes her as *Churchill's Maverick MP*. The word *maverick* is not used lightly. It reflects an independence of mind that marked almost every stage of her public life. Churchill valued loyalty, but he also admired courage, originality and the willingness to challenge accepted opinion. Those qualities Mavis Tate possessed in abundance. She was never content simply to follow the political tide; instead, she sought evidence, formed her own judgement and accepted whatever consequences followed.

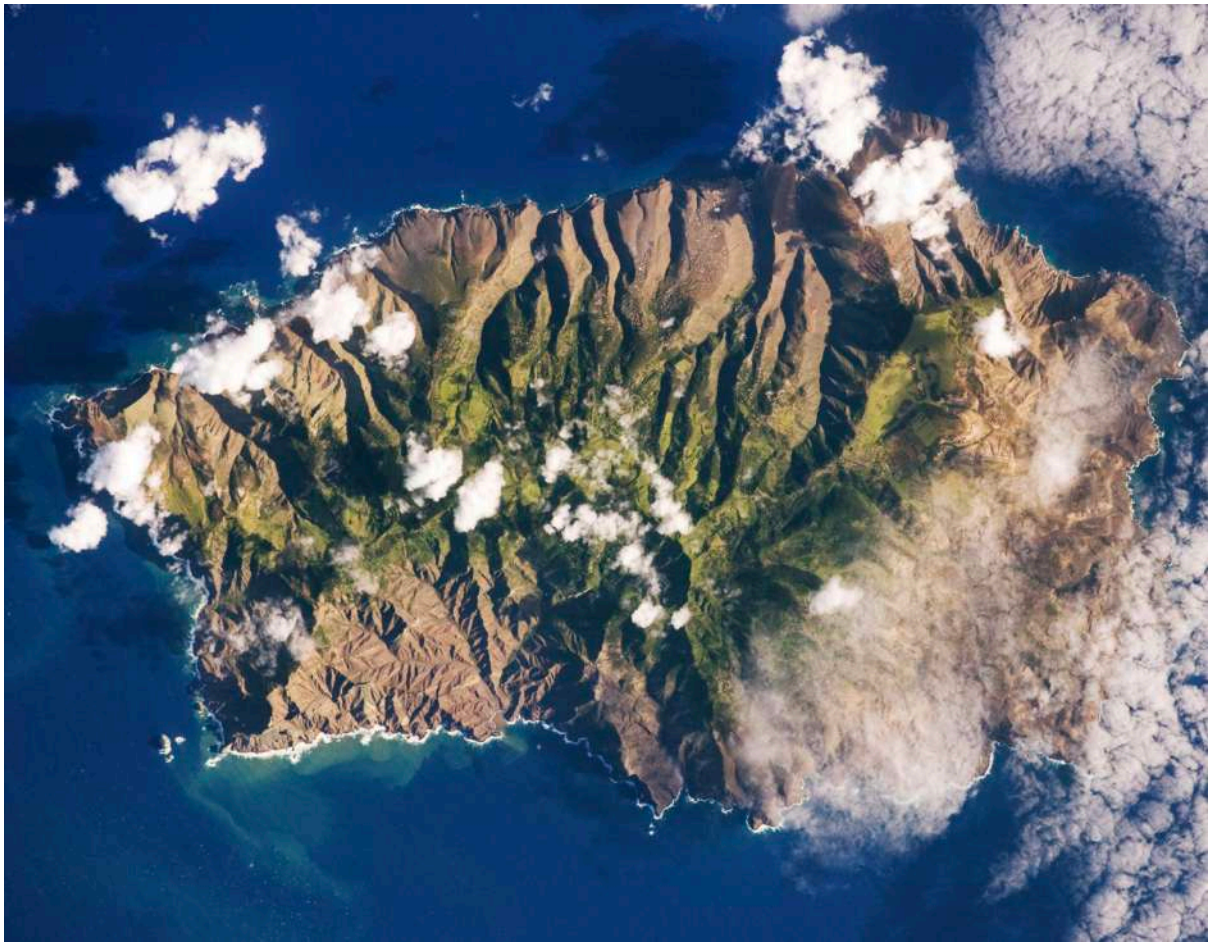
This biography is therefore not simply the story of an individual politician. It is also an exploration of a remarkable woman who refused to accept the limitations imposed by convention. It follows her journey from the distant shores of St Helena to the green benches of the House of Commons; from the drawing rooms of Edwardian society to the dark years of the Second World War; from personal heartbreak to public achievement. Along the way the reader encounters not only Mavis herself but the political, social and cultural landscape through which she travelled.

Many readers will approach these pages knowing little, if anything, about Mavis Tate. That is understandable. History is selective, and memory even more so. Yet sometimes those who have been overlooked prove to have the most compelling stories. In recovering her life we gain more than the biography of a forgotten Member of Parliament. We discover a woman of intelligence, resilience and principle whose contribution deserves recognition alongside many of the better-known figures of her generation.

If, by the closing pages of this book, readers find themselves wondering why they had never heard of Mavis Tate before, then this biography will have achieved one of its principal aims.

1. An Island Paradise - A Noble Family

On 17 August 1893 on one of the most remote islands in the world Constance Hogg, wife of the Sheriff Guy Weir Hogg, gave birth to a daughter whom they named Maybird Hogg, the future Mavis Tate. St Helena is a tropical island of volcanic origin which lies 2,500 miles east of Rio de Janeiro, 1,200 miles from the coastline of southwestern Africa and approximately 4,400 miles from London. Totalling 85 square miles it was one of the British Empire's most distant outposts. Discovered in the early 16th century this island paradise was uninhabited and claimed initially by the Portuguese who named it Santa Helena, after Helena of Constantinople. Despite its far-off locale, there was an abundance of trees and fresh water and so the Portuguese began to import livestock, fruit trees and vegetables. Although no permanent settlement was established by them, it became an important stopping off point for Portuguese shipping travelling around the Cape of Good Hope, on their journey between Asia and Europe. It also acted as a recovery bay, whereby sick mariners would be put ashore to be attended to and, once well, continue their journey aboard the next ship to make port. By 1657 the Portuguese, along with subsequent settlers – the Spanish and Dutch – had forsaken the island for colonies dotted along the West African coast due to attacks on their shipping by the English lying in wait in the surrounding waters. The East India Company had been formed on 31 December 1600 by permission of Elizabeth I and later, the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, granted the Company a charter to govern the island, its remit was to trade in the Indian Ocean region, initially with Mughal India and the East Indies, and later with Qing China.



The Isle of St Helena (Julian Herzog CC)

The Honourable East India Company, as it became, fortified the island and began to colonise it. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, the original charter to govern became a royal one giving the company sole rights to increase their activities and its expansion became so great that it accounted for half of the world's trade and employed a private army twice the size of the official British one. Through seizing of control of large parts of the Indian subcontinent and colonising parts of Southeast Asia and Hong Kong it laid the foundations and stimulated the growth of the British Empire. Towards the end of the century, the war with France prevented ships calling at the port and conditions became so bad that there was a mutiny among the soldiers garrisoned there. This was put down and gradually a period of great prosperity ensued as the population began to expand. In 1723, the inhabitants numbered 1,110 of which around 600 were slaves, and by 1814, the year before the Battle of Waterloo, the population had risen to about 4,000. This increased further in the years following the conflict, when the islanders 'welcomed' the defeated Napoleon, his entourage, assorted hangers on and curious onlookers, along with the British soldiers sent to guard him. Bonaparte referred to St Helena as 'that little rock at the end of the world'. He lived in the governor's residence, 'Lockword' which, through almost continuous dampness had hardly ever been occupied and was to be scene of his death in 1821.

During the period of Napoleon's imprisonment, the island was still governed by the East India Company, but thirteen years after his death, and with the introduction of the 1833 Indian Act, the island became a Crown Colony. In many ways, this saw its gradual decline both in population and importance. Those with the money to leave, did so and with the introduction of steam vessels shipping was no longer reliant on trade winds, and with the opening of the Suez Canal, the island's strategic position as a stopping port for returning ships from India and China diminished rapidly as fewer ships called in to resupply. In 1855, for example, the island saw 1,100 ships, but by the year of Mavis Tate's birth, around forty years later, this had been reduced to less than 300.

East India House, Leadenhall Street, London (Creative Commons)

The island remained part of the British Empire, and there were still people to be governed, imperial authority to be imposed, business to be undertaken and money to be made. It was probably these elements, that drew Guy Weir Hogg to the island accompanied wife Mary, in early January 1893. Hogg was first and foremost a merchant following in the footsteps of his ancestors. Towards the end of the 19th century, this branch of the Hogg family had become well-established and professional with very strong links to the English East India Company and later the Bengal Civil Service who, even if not fully-fledged members of the British aristocracy, were certainly not unwelcome inside the circles of the titled and elite.

Far back in the mists of time, perhaps in the 13th century, some of the Hogg family had made their way across the water from Scandinavia to settle in Berwickshire, Scotland. They brought with them the family motto of Dat *Gloria Vires* (A good name gives strength). One of

the clan, James Weir Hogg was born in Lisburn, County Antrim, in 1790 and educated at Trinity College, Dublin, he trained as a barrister before moving to India in 1814, where he obtained a large and lucrative practice. Hogg married Mary Swinton, the daughter of Samuel Swinton of Berwickshire on 26 July 1822.

Sir James Weir Hogg (1790-1876) in 1856 (CC)

In the same year James became Registrar of the Supreme Court of Judicature, Calcutta, which he held until his return to England in 1833. He was first elected MP for Beverley in 1834, followed by Honiton from 1847–1857, but lost his seat by two votes at the general election of that year. In 1839 he had been made a director of the East India Company and was created baronet of Upper Grosvenor Street in the County of London in 1846. He was twice elected chairman of the East India Company before serving as a member of the Council of India, until his resignation in 1872 at the age of 82.

Sir James and Lady Hogg had fourteen children, seven sons and the same number of daughters. Their eldest son James MacNaghten McGarel-Hogg (1823-1890) also become a Member of Parliament, first representing Bath, (1865-68), then Truro, (1871-1885) and finally Hornsey in North London (1885-1887). Hogg's seventh son Quintin Hogg (1845-1903) was a merchant and philanthropist who founded the Polytechnic in Regent Street, London and the father of Douglas McGarel Hogg, (1872-1950) who was created 1st Viscount Hailsham in 1929, a lawyer and prominent member of the Conservative Party. James Weir Hogg's second son was Mavis's grandfather Charles Swinton Hogg (1824-1870) who was born in India and worked for the Bengal Civil Service becoming Administer-General for the region; he married Harriet Anne Stirling, daughter of Sir Walter Stirling of Faskine, in December 1860.

His eldest son was Guy Weir Hogg born in Calcutta 1861 and father to Mavis. When he died in March of 1870 at the age of 45 Guy was nine years old and his widow Harriet and family returned shortly after to England, their last child Violet was born in London in October. By the census of April 1871 Harriet and family were recorded as at 7 Eccleston Square and she was living off, 'Interest on money invested in English and Indian Railways.' Guy was at a prep school in Cheam until the age of 13 when he attended Eton College, the independent boarding school which catered for boys until they were 18 and throughout its several centuries of existence, educated prime ministers, world leaders, Nobel laureates and many generations of the aristocracy; so much so, that it had long been referred to as 'the chief nurse of England's statesmen.' After Eton he went to Christchurch, Oxford in May 1880 and upon graduating, successfully took the examination in June 1883 for the Royal Military College at Sandhurst to begin his military career which proved to be short lived.

By the census of April 1891, he was living at 68 Warwick Square, Pimlico, just south of Belgravia aged 29 and working as a life insurance inspector. He was unmarried and had four servants living with him but this was to be his last year as a bachelor, as on 8 November of the following year he married Constance Piercy 'Minnie' Marsden born in July 1867 the daughter of a retired banker. He was now 31 years of age and living at 50 Ebury Street, not far from his former address. The wedding took place in the same district, at St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, not far from Buckingham Palace. The neoclassical building, designed by architect Henry Hakewell, included Ionic columns, and a clock tower, along with a recently added memorial window to its former churchwarden and Guy's late uncle, James MacNaghten Hogg. It would later be described by *The Times* 'as one of the most beautiful churches in London.' A report of the wedding appeared a few days later in *The Queen*, an illustrated weekly magazine founded by Samuel Beaton which had been providing its readership with all the goings on in high society for more than thirty years.

> 'A pretty wedding took place at St Peter's Church, Eaton-Square, on Tuesday last,' the article began, 'when Mr Guy Weir Hogg, son of the late Charles Swinton Hogg, Administrator-General of Bengal, and grandson of the late Sir James Weir Hogg, Bart., was married to Miss Constance Piercy (Minnie) Marsden, eldest surviving daughter of the late Mr Henry Joseph Marsden. The chancel was beautifully decorated with a number of large palms, forming an arch, under which the ceremony took place. The eight bridesmaids were tastefully dressed in white transparent China silk, with under-dresses of pink silk shimmering through.' These included a sister and several cousins

> of the bridegroom's and a sister of the bride. 'Empire sashes of pink satin encircled the waist,' the report continued, 'with a large bow at the back, but no ends. Their large hats were of white velvet with full crowns . . . and trimmed with bows of the same and upstanding plumes of pink ostrich feathers, fastened with bows of pink satin ribbon, a similar tip resting on the hair at the back. Instead of bouquets, the bridesmaids carried palm-leaf fans, covered at the back with pink silk and crepe de Chine to match their sashes, and in front with pink carnations, white chrysanthemums, hyacinths, and tinted foliage; above was the initial of the bride or bridegroom in white flowers, those on the right bearing the latter's, and those on the left the former's. These were the design and gift of the bridegroom, who also gave each lady a gold bangle with her own initial in corals and pearls.

The couple left for Bournemouth, then an up and coming seaside resort where Constance had relatives. It seems likely that Maybird (later to adopt the name Mavis) was conceived during their time here, or on their journey to their new home on St Helena, as Maybird Hogg was born nine months and nine days after their marriage.

2. Childhood 1893-1915

With his lack of academic distinction and unsuitability for an army career, Guy Hogg had to carve out a life for himself and on the 8 December 1892, he and Constance set out from London on the *Conway Castle* to the tiny island of St Helena. Their first child, a daughter, Maybird Constance Hogg was born on the 17 August 1893 at Prince's Lodge, James Town and baptised on 27 October the same year. Guy's reasons for moving to the island are not known and records of the family's time there are sparse but the strategic island was pretty much owned and controlled by one trading company, Solomon & Co. a company in which another branch of the Hogg family had been involved since at least 1865 under the name Solomons, Hogg & Co. and it seems that despite his lack of academic achievement family connections had provided an opening for him.

Saul Solomon had founded his business empire after arriving on the island at death's door in 1790. In a very short time he recovered his health and, seeing the possibility of trade with the many ships that called on their way to and from India and the Cape, he set himself up in business, initially as a hotel-keeper but soon broadened his activities to include an insurance business, an undertaker and the installation of the island's first printing press, which produced the *St Helena Register* newspaper. It seemed that the island was his for the taking and the family became rich as its importance as a strategic trading post grew. Saul died in 1852 but the Solomon family were sheriffs of the island for over 50 years.

In June 1894 just, a few months after his arrival Guy was initiated into the Old Rock Lodge of the local Freemasons with his occupation given simply as 'merchant'. In September of 1894 Maybird had a little brother, Kenneth Weir Hogg and Guy eased himself into a comfortable position as part of the local elite being listed in the Official Directory for1895 as Consul to Portugal based on the island. Hogg held a number of diplomatic appointments, in 1896 he was made Sherriff of St Helena a position that he held for a year becoming British Consul in Monaco, from 1925 until 1928, a JP, founder and first editor of the *Uganda Herald* and editor of the *East African Leader*.

On 5 June Constance sailed to England with baby Kenneth and young Maybird aboard the *Harlech Castle,* presumably, this was Maybird's first trip to the country and they spent some time here as on 17 October Mr and Mrs Guy Weir Hogg attended the wedding of Major W Weallens and Miss Helena Cicely West in Bristol and gave some lace handkerchiefs. The occasion was also attended by a Mr and Mrs Holst, probably the parents of Gustav who lived in Cheltenham and who would have been 21 at the time. In November 1896 the couple travelled to England once more for another wedding when Henry Gomme JP married Grace Marsden youngest daughter of the late HJ Marsden, this time the Hoggs gave a diamond broach.

It would seem that Guy's relationship with Solomons was not a fruitful one, details have not survived but the family left the island for Cape Town, South Africa after only four years and in January of 1898 Guy become a member of St Georges Lodge. No occupation is recorded and he gave his address as the C(ivil) Service Club, a society founded in 1861 to 'raise the tone of the Government Service and create a stronger *esprit de corps* among the younger members by giving them an opportunity to mix with their elders and if possible, to keep them out of public bars.' Confined to the civil service, diplomatic service, army, navy and learned

professions, merchants were treated with contempt and catered for elsewhere. The Service Club provided a friendly and relaxed atmosphere for Cape Town's ruling class to meet and strengthen bonds which were integral to the shaping and maintaining a dominant European culture.

In February 1898 the family returned to England to attend yet another wedding, that of Miss Violet Waddington, daughter of Major-General Waddington of The Chestnuts, Pangbourne and Major George Arthur Gott, of the 7th Bengal Lancers son of the late William Ewart Gott on 17 March when they gave porcelain coffee cups. On 19 March 1898 Constance, her two children and a nurse made the return trip from Southampton to The Cape on board the *Goorka* with Guy following on aboard the *Norman* on December 17. By 1901 Guy's mother Harriet was in gainful employment and at the age of 59 having become 'Directress of Duchess of Deaconess House', Islington, with numerous boarders. The Deaconesses with their white head-dresses were a distinctive sight around the streets and their medical and home mission work was well-known. Perhaps the railway shares weren't doing as well as she had hoped. An issue of the weekly tabloid magazine *Bystander* for May 1904 announced that Guy Hogg of Villa des Alpes, Davos, Switzerland was in receipt of an 'Honourable Mention' in a bridge competition. He didn't win a prize but he did get two packs of, pneumatic playing cards for his efforts. He had proved to be good at something. and a life based around making contacts and socialising is pretty much what being a consul is all about.

Maybird Constance Hogg

Maybird attended St Paul's Girls' School from April 1907 at the age of 13 and left in December 1910 at the age of 17, no further records of her time exist with the school. Family friend Gustav Holst was director of music at the school from 1905 until his death in 1934. An article in *Woman's Own* during February 1945 gave a small glimpse into her childhood, ‘As a young girl she wanted to be an actress but as her parents thought the theatre wicked she was not even allowed to go inside one until she was 17 consoling herself with writing plays and acting in charades. At school she loathed mathematics and languages but liked literature, handicrafts and drawing. When she grew a little older she added doctor or solicitor to her range of career options, but when her father heard this he took her away from school at the age of 15 (sic) observing that it was a woman's business to marry not to work.' She later described her young self as, 'an extremely sociable and affectionate child with strong likes and dislikes, self-willed and always up to some mischief, and claimed that she was 'ever aware that her brother

was far more important than her'. From a brief glance through the school records that have survived it seems that the headmistress was quite progressive in her views and this may have been the start of her young pupil's feminist opinions and desire to join a profession in rejection of her fathers preferred path of housewife and mother-although she was very proud of her cookery skills later in life.

Records of her early years have proved hard to come by but we know that in January 1909 at the age of 15 she attended the wedding of Robert Dundas and Mary Ramsay at the Cathedral Church of Edinburgh. Mrs Caroline Hogg was the bride's grandmother and gave the wedding dress. The bridesmaids included misses Maybird, and Winifred Hogg, cousins of the bride and misses Evelyn and Penelope Hog (sic) cousins of the groom. Mr and Mrs GW Hogg gave a leather case for timetables etc. The Post Office Directories for 1910-1915 list the Hoggs' as living at Block 4, 78 Iverna Court, Kensington and the 1911 census has that property occupied on the night by Constance, described as the head of the household, of independent means, aged 43, Kenneth her son a schoolboy aged 16 with one female servant. Guy, it seems, was elsewhere and Maybird Constance Hogg now aged 17 was a student of domestic economy at Glidewell House, 92, Northdown Road, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent along with eight young ladies aged between 17 and 25 boarding with one proprietress and one servant. Again, records of her time there have not survived and we have no knowledge of when she left. Margate had over 200 private educational establishments, as the only requirement to be called a school was to have 20 pupils and many of the large Georgian and Victorian buildings could easily accommodate this.

Younger brother Kenneth was attending Haileybury College, Hertfordshire, which was originally a training college for the administrators of the East India Company but had become a major public school for boys. He was later accepted by Christ Church, Oxford like his father but seems to have had quite a bit more about him than his parent. He too chose an army career joining the Irish Guards as Second Lieutenant raising to Captain in 1916 and made the army his career suffering wounds towards the end of the war.

3. War & Marriage 1915

In June it was announced in the Hampshire newspapers that Lieutenant Gerald Ewart Gott of Will Hall, Alton, Hampshire, had become engaged and on Wednesday 4 August 1915, exactly one year after Britain's declaration of war, the *Sketch* – sister paper to the *London Illustrated News* which was, according to its masthead, 'the best paper for society and fashion' – made an announcement. Page eleven of that issue contained the images of ten young society women, their portraits taken by fashionable photographers of the day, Swaine, Langfier and Lafayette, which appeared beneath the heading: 'Engagements of the Moment'. Each image carried below it the name of a future bride and that of her intended; most of the latter with military titles. Near the bottom right of the page was an image of Mavis, under her birthname, Miss Maybird C Hogg, the caption proclaimed that she was to marry Captain GE Gott. The publication was just in time, as by the following issue a week later, they were husband and wife.

The Sketch August 1915

When or where Gerald and Maybird met, and the details of their courtship are not known but the families did know each other or at least attended some of the same functions. One example was the 1898 wedding when a cousin of Mavis's mother, Constance Marsden married Gerald's father the Gott-Waddington marriage mentioned above, although of course the future 'happy couple' would only have been five years old at the time. There was also the Indian connection. Both families had strong ties with both the Indian Staff Corp and the civil service, so it may well have been that Mavis knew Gerald before the start of the war. It was also possible that they met in South African where Gerald was stationed at Pretoria from 1912 to the outbreak of war, and Mavis's father was in the country at least some time during this period.

Their wedding took place at St Mary Abbots Church, Kensington a mere 400 yards from Iverna Court on 9 August 1915. The service was conducted by Gerald's uncle, Revd CR Gott vicar of St Germans in Cornwall but unlike previous marriages concerning the Hoggs, this one seems to have gone almost totally unreported by the press with only a brief statement of the facts in the *Reading Mercury.* It is assumed that after their honeymoon, Mavis continued to live with her parents in Kensington while Gerald went back to war. Eight days after their marriage Mavis turned 22 and it seemed that her future was set, as her father had intended, for

Maybird to become a wife, mother, and homemaker but things were not to work out exactly as planned.

Gerald Ewart Gott was born on 16 January 1893 to Captain George Arthur Gott of the Indian Staff Corps and Gertrude Alice Gott (née Boosey), making him six months older than Mavis. His birthplace of Bromley in Kent was an historic market town, with a charter going back to the twelfth century. Its location along a coaching route and the later coming of the railways in 1858 were key elements in its shift from agrarian village to commerce and retail causing Bromley's population increase significantly. Author HG Wells was born there, in 1866, and spent the first thirteen years of his life in the town. By the time Gerald reached his first birthday its landscape had changed beyond recognition, and the family had returned to India as part of his father's military career.

Gerald had been the second child for his parents, their first, George Aitchison, had died the previous year, aged 15 months. On 5 March 1894, further tragedy struck the Gott family when Gertrude Alice, Gerald's mother, died at the age of 32 and in keeping with India's funeral traditions she was buried the next day. How long the now motherless boy stayed with his grieving father we do not know, but it seems highly likely that young Gerald was brought back to England soon after, to be brought up by his maternal grandparents, Charles and Jane Boosey. Certainly, on census night of 31 March 1901 the eight-year old was staying at their residence, 1 Courtney Terrace, in Hove. Gerald's father had by now remarried – this was the 1898 Gott-Waddington wedding that Mavis' mother had attended – and the couple had a two-year-old daughter (Gerald's half-sister). Despite the loss of his mother there would have been an abundance of 'motherly' love around Gerald as he was growing up. Also living at the Boosey's home around that time were three of his maiden aunts – all in their thirties. There was seemingly no absence of material wealth either - on census night there were eight servants, along with Gerald, his grandparents and their three single daughters, all staying within the spacious Boosey residence.

During the time that Gerald lived with his grandparents, his grandfather was head of the family business. His ancestors were of Franco-Flemish origin, but Boosey & Company, the firm he now headed, could trace its roots back to John Boosey, a bookseller and sheet music lender in 18th century London. John Boosey's son Thomas continued this business, while his grandson, Thomas Jr., set up a separate branch, which became Boosey & Company. They began publishing the works of such composers as Hummel and Ries, along with important operas by the likes of Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi, while English composers, Elgar and Vaughan Williams would be later signings. In the mid-nineteenth century the company diversified into the manufacturing of woodwind instruments followed by brass and string. Meanwhile, in 1867, John Boosey – son of the younger Thomas and Charles Boosey's brother – established what would become the hugely successful London Ballad Concerts at St James Hall. Boosey & Company moved offices in 1874, setting up at 295 Regent Street, where it would remain for the next 131 years during which time would come to own half of the street and merge, in 1930, with its main rival, Hawkes & Son, to create Boosey & Hawkes the largest specialist classical music publisher in the world. With Thomas Boosey jnr's death in 1871 Charles, his eldest son, had taken over the reins and guided the company into the 20th century. At the age of 13 Gerald moved to Wellington College at Crowthorne in Berkshire a school begun 'to educate the sons of deceased officers' and three years later he was an officer cadet.

Whether Gerald's choice of career was his alone we do not know but if he did have a say in his own future there were several attractive options. On his maternal side, he could have been given an important position in Boosey & Co. or he might have dabbled with the thought of becoming an artist. Charles Boosey's sister, Caroline, had married the portrait painter Charles Blair Leighton and their son was Edmund Blair Leighton, the renowned painter of historical scenes. On his paternal side, several members of the Gott family – including his other grandfather William Ewart Gott – had been successful cloth merchants, while others had entered the clergy. At the same time, although not an out and out military family, there were several high-ranking officers within his immediate circle. His father, for example, had now risen from Captain to Colonel, the same rank also held by Gerald's eldest uncle, while a son by this uncle – Gerald's cousin – would also enter the military and seemed destined to rise to the top of his profession until his death in 1942 when the transport plane in which he was travelling was shot down on its way to Cairo and the career of William Henry Ewart 'Strafer' Gott was brought to an abrupt end. Gerald entered the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, at the age of 16, in 1909, and began training to become a commissioned officer. The 1911 census, taken when he was 18 years of age, records his continued attendance and he graduated with the rank of Second Lieutenant – the first rank held after being commissioned – before being assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment on the 14 February 1912.

The regiment had been raised in 1688 by King James II to combat the threat of invasion from William of Orange but after the latter's successful 'Glorious Revolution', they found themselves fighting for him the following year, against the French. In 1858, the 2nd Battalion was raised in Ireland, and the remainder of the century saw overseas posting to Canada, the West Indies and India. They returned briefly to England, before being sent to South Africa during the Second Boer War. They served there as part of the 12th Brigade, within the 6th Division, and returned once more to England in 1903 where they remained until 1907, when they began their next 'Grand Tour'. This saw the battalion in Gibraltar, Bermuda and then, in 1912, back to South Africa and specifically Roberts Heights, near Pretoria. It was here that the newly appointed Second Lieutenant GE Gott joined them on completion of his training. Although his rank was normally held for anything up to two years, by April of 1913, he was promoted to Lieutenant and Gott found himself in command of a 30-strong platoon.

The 2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, along with Lieutenant Gott, were still on duty in South Africa at the outbreak of war and were immediately recalled to England. They arrived at Southampton on 19 September 1914 and on landing became part of the 'Immortal' 7th Division. After being reequipped for European warfare, the Bedfords, along with the rest of the Division, left England on 5 October 1914, and landed at Zeebrugge, in Belgium, two days later. They arrived too late to carry out their original objective – relieving Antwerp, and were employed to cover the 'retirement of the Belgian Army*,'* covering around 160 miles, marching 'to and fro' across northern Flanders. It now found itself an important element in the 'race to the sea' when they became the first British troops to cover Ypres. The Division was ordered to hold the line before the town until the other six divisions of the British Expeditionary Force could be brought up from the Aisne. Ordered to hold on at all costs, it was in continual action from the 15th to the 31st October with a strength of 18,000 with no reserves or supports. It held a single-line covering eight miles of front with only 18 field pieces, four 4.7' field guns and a minimum of ammunition, but managed to hold on against some 340,000 Germans, with guns

in proportion. Sometime during this prolonged action, Lieutenant Gott was wounded. Although his medal card has the date recorded as the 23rd, according to the regiment's own war diary, the action was eight days later and the entry records:

> 31 Oct 1914 – near Inverness Copse. Early in the morning about 2.30 a.m. orders were received to occupy a small fir wood about 250 yards in front of us which was then held by L. North Lancs R. Captain Lemon and 2 platoons of C Company were ordered to hold this position. This wood had been subjected to heavy shell fire from two sides during the previous day. Shell fire started as soon as it was light. It soon became evident that the enemy were advancing in force on the left of the wood held by Captain Lemon and also on the right. The Adjutant went to report the situation to Brigade H.Q. and almost immediately on his return to Battalion H.Q. [SIC] 2 orderlies arrived with an order from the Brigadier to retire fighting towards MENIN-YPRES road. Part of the Battalion moved back in compliance of this order. An order was sent to Captain Lemon to retire from the fir wood upon the Battalion. Part of the Battalion remained in the trenches till late in the afternoon, about 4.30 P.M. when they were brought back and established a line which they held till relieved on Nov. 5/6.

The entry goes on to list the appalling casualties inflicted upon the battalion during this single day of fighting. Both the battalion's commanding officer and second in command – Majors JM Traill and RP Stares, respectively, were killed, along with Lieutenant JA Paterson. Both Lieutenant WC Anderson and Captain EH Lyddon were recorded as missing, while Captain AB Lemon was twice wounded and captured. Of the remaining officers of the battalion, Captain CS Garnet-Botfield was severely wounded, while others, wounded less severely were Second Lieutenant W Dixon and Lieutenant Gilbert Ewart (sic) Gott. By the end of the day, only four officers remained, along with 350-400 other ranks.

The wounded Lieutenant Gott was brought back to England and admitted to the Queen Alexandra Military Hospital (QAMH) adjacent to the River Thames and bordering the neighbourhoods of Millbank, Pimlico and Westminster. The building was officially opened in July 1905 by King Edward VII and his wife Queen Alexandra, after whom it was named. At the outbreak of the war it became a general hospital for the British Army, dealing with injuries not only from munitions, as in Lieutenant Gott's case, but also trench fever, frostbite, shellshock, and gas gangrene. Gott's medical records show that he suffered from a fractured left arm, but the length of his stay – 214 days – seems somewhat excessive, given that the average time in those days for the fracture to be mended would have been only 6 to 8 weeks. There may have been more going on, but given his later record, it seems highly unlikely that he was pulling a fast one. Whatever the situation, Gott spent Christmas, New Year and the first months of 1915 at the QAMH.

According to his medical records, he left hospital at the beginning of June 1915 and moved to a convalescent home at 17 Park Lane, in Mayfair. This large mansion house was part of the QAMH and became the hospital for wounded officers. It had been founded by the Australian surgeon Douglas Andrew Shields in 1912, with finance from the widow of financier Benjamin Fink. Shields had been asked in 1911 by Mrs Fink to attend her son, Harold, who was gravely ill. Although they were unable to save him Mrs Fink showed her gratitude by bankrolling a

private practice for Shields in London and he moved from Melbourne in 1912 to oversee what became known as the Harold Fink Memorial Hospital. The hospital had 20 beds and by the beginning of 1917, more than 1,300 officers had been treated there. While still in hospital at the end of April Gott was given temporary promotion to Captain backdated to March 1st - 'Captains are usually made second-in-command of a sub-unit of up to 120 soldiers. They are key players in the planning and decision-making process, with tactical responsibilities for operations on the ground as well as equipment maintenance, logistical support and manpower'.

By April 1916 Gott was serving in the Machine Gun Corps as a temporary captain. The corps was one of the few 'war raised' units, having had no existence prior to the conflict but at its height it had well over 100,000 serving soldiers, plus officers. It is unfortunate that this corps is one of the least researched of the participants in the Great War, all its records appear to have been destroyed at various times and reconstructing its history and that of those who served in it has proved difficult.

The corps was formed in October 1915 in response to the need for more effective use of machine guns on the Western Front. At the outbreak of war in August 1914 the tactical potential of machine guns was not appreciated by the British military who went into battle with each infantry battalion and cavalry regiment containing a machine gun section of just two guns each. This was supplemented in November 1914 by the formation of the Motor Machine Gun Service (MMGS), administered by the Royal Artillery, consisting of motorcycle mounted machine gun batteries. A depot and training centre was established at Belton Park in Grantham, Lincolnshire, and very possibly Gott went for training there, he was appointed to the Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) as a Temporary Captain in July 1916 and seconded to the Machine Gun Corps (Heavy) in October 1916.

A machine gun school was also opened in France -with a base depot at Camiers and the Heavy Section of the MGC was formed in March 1916. Gott was 'seconded' from the infantry section of the MCG and into this new unit in October 1916 which seems to have been his first appointment after recovering from his wounds. He joined 184th MGC, which became part of 61st (2nd South Midland) Division which took part in the operations on the Ancre at the beginning of 1917. It was men of this section who were the first to use tanks in combat and who crewed the first tanks in action at Flers, during the Battle of the Somme in September 1916. The Heavy Section became the Heavy Branch in November of 1916 and in July 1917 the they separated from the MGC entirely to become the Tank Corps, later the Royal Tank Regiment. There is no evidence that Gott was on the tanks but as explained, hardly any records survive. The MGC was disbanded in 1922. It was during his time with the Heavy Branch in January 1917 at the age of 24 that he was wounded for the second time with a fracture of the left forearm and was back at Queen Alexandra's Hospital from January to March 1917, before being transferred once more to 17 Park Lane to recover. He was admitted to the QA yet again on the 17 August 1917 this time with a fractured wrist and the hospital must have seemed like a second home by now; he was 'discharged to duty' on 13 September. Once recovered from his wounds, he became involved in Officer Cadet Training, based at Trinity College, Cambridge. His address there being 57 De Freville, Avenue - or at least that was the address he gave when he was caught riding his bike on the pavement in February 1918.

Captain GE Gott February 1918

Gott rejoined the Bedfords in September 1918, just in time to take part in an action which resulted in him being awarded the Military Cross for his actions at Spehy-Ronssoy, during the battle of the Hindenburg Line on the 18th of that month. The action is described in the official history of the 2nd Battalion:

> At 5.20 a.m. the assault began; in the darkness the 7th Royal West Kents drifted slightly to the right, so that our leading companies, who were following in support, became involved in the fighting. Captain Gott's company specially distinguished itself by clearing a spinney where three machine-guns and 30 prisoners were captured and many killed. From here the leading companies were in touch with the enemy and consequently were somewhat exhausted and reduced in strength on arrival at our correct jumping-off line.
>
> The Battalion attacked in square formation, with "C" Company on the left and "B" Company on the right in front line, with "A" and "B" Companies in support. Ronssoy was quickly overrun, and then the mopping up was taken in hand. Two of the three tanks of "A: Company, 2nd Tank Battalion, were of the greatest help in the village.

For his actions on that day Gott was awarded the Military Cross,

> '…. For great gallantry and determined leadership in command of supporting company in an attack on Ronssoy. He early became engaged with the enemy and overcame opposition, capturing three machineguns and 20 prisoners and killing many. In reaching objective he reorganised his company under heavy shell fire and thoroughly cleared this area of all hidden enemy.' Heroism can come at a cost and Gott was badly hit by shrapnel causing a wound to his left leg with compound fractures to his tibia and fibula. By the 23rd he was back at the Queen Alexandra Hospital and was still there during the following January.

Just two months after Gott was injured, on 11 November 1918 the 'war to end all wars' was over. The men of the 2nd Battalion served throughout the conflict with distinction earning hundreds of gallantry medals including a prestigious Victoria Cross. Around 1,540 officers and men gave their lives for king and country serving in the battalion, and around 6,500 were wounded in combat. Gott was still in the army hospital, and so civilian married life couldn't begin just yet if it ever did.

By the end of the war, Mavis's parents had moved from Iverna Court to 34 Bloomfield Terrace, Westminster, SW1 a modest three-story house in a good area. There are no details of where Mavis was living at this time but presumably with her parents so that she could visit Gott in hospital rather than her husband's family home at Will Hall in Alton, Hampshire. Either way, she probably had little independence, being subject to the exacting rules and regulations set down by her parents or in-laws.

The final year of the decade saw the signing of the Versailles Treaty, an act which, in hindsight, laid the foundations for the Second World War, allowing Hitler to rise from the ashes of post-war Germany, decimated by inflation and reparations extracted from the avenging

victors. New Year's Eve 1919 came around, and Mavis was preparing, like everyone else, for the start of the new decade, the decade of a new beginning, a decade of peace, but her family was struck by tragedy. Her parents were by this time living at 2, Ruskin Close, Hampstead Garden Suburb and occupying separate bedrooms and on Wednesday evening, New Year's Eve, 'after seeing to his wife's comfort and wishing her good night he retired to his room.' The following morning, he went to awaken her but was almost suffocated by escaping gas and after opening the window and turning off the gas, he discovered that Constance was dead, her head covered with a blanket and the gas fire turned on. Guy explained to the coroner's court that his wife had not been in good health and had been suffering from nervous trouble for some months continually complaining of deafness and noises, and despite being treated by many physicians she had received no relief. In early December while he was away in Scotland, he had received a letter from her saying that her deafness was sending her crazy and that she was suffering from a nervous breakdown. On Christmas Eve he took her to see a Dr Weir of Welbeck Street who said that the trouble was purely temporary and that she would recover but she continued to be very depressed saying that she felt really ill. Dr Steadman of Golders Green stated that he had seen the deceased about six weeks before when she complained of depression and noises in her head, adding that she was a very delicate lady. The inquest concluded that death was due to coal gas poisoning and that she was of unsound mind when she took her life at the age of 51. According to Debrett Guy moved to Gwydyr Mansions, Hove and was living there in 1924 by then aged 63.

Meanwhile Gott was still on the King Edward VII ward at Millbank Hospital during January and even though the war was over he was still a serving soldier and with his serious leg wound he was given lighter duties so that by mid-March 1920 he was assigned to No.1 Infantry Record Office, Warley (a barracks near Brentwood in Essex), on half pay and where his bicycle got him in trouble once more, this time he was summoned for riding without proper lights and fined five shillings. The old leg wound must have been recovering nicely if he could ride a bike and he was still there at the end of October.

The 1921 census was taken on 19 June and the entry for Bloomfield Terrace shows Maybird Constance Gott in occupation, of independent means with a domestic servant, 43 year old Ellenfrom Devon. Gott is not listed and although he is described as the person making the return he was presumably still away working at Warley. In an interesting administrative cock up her birthplace is recorded as St Helena, Jersey in the Channel Islands rather than more exotic South Atlantic.

On 17 March 1922 Gott boarded the *Balmoral Castle* at Southampton bound for Cape Town, South Africa. He travelled third class amongst typists, carpenters and dressmakers on a voyage of 33 days and ticked the box to say that South Africa was to be his permeant residence. He described himself as 'ex-army' aged 29 and his last address as 34 Bloomfield Terrace, Westminster. Mavis did not accompany him on the voyage but must have travelled out later as on 18 March 1923 as Constance Gott she is shown as returning from Cape Town travelling first class on the *Gloucester Castle* to London; giving her address as 34 Bloomfield Terrace.

34, Bloomfield Terrace

She ticked the box to say that she was intending England to be her permanent place of residence. Ship's passenger lists are not a particularly reliable source of information, and we do not know how much of the time between the two known trips she spent out there or if she returned to England at various points, but it seems that the marriage was failing during this period prompting her return London. It is probable that whatever other problems the marriage may have had the prospect of becoming a farmer's wife in a foreign land was not to her liking despite her father's wishes. They could not have had much of a married life together as when he wasn't in hospital, he was out with his regiment. It is speculation but it seems that as soon as he was free of the army he shipped out to South Africa for good, abandoning Mavis despite her efforts to get him to return. Perhaps his first posting to such a beautiful country in 1912 resulted in a deep attraction with which she could not compete.

On 24 October1924 Mrs GE Gott aged 30 travelled first class on the *Edinburgh Castle* from Southampton to Cape Town accompanied by her maid Miss K Blake 31 and Mrs Smith aged 39 and described as of no occupation. They all claimed to reside at Didlington Hall, Norfolk and gave their 'country of intended future permanent residence' as England. Mavis's travelling companion, Mrs Julia Smith was the wife of Colonel Herbert Francis Smith JP, Lord of the Manor, a rich banker and one of the directors of the National Provincial Bank. Their connection to Mavis is not known.

Didlington Hall, Norfolk

It seems that her latest trip was intended to sort out her marriage one way or the other. In papers lodged with the Supreme Court of South Africa in Natal on 26 November 1924 Maybird declares that 'The DEFENDANT, (Gott) maliciously and wrongfully and without good reason

deserted The PLAINTIFF (Maybird) more than 18 months ago in or about the month of February 1923 and has not returned to her since. The defendant resides at Farningham, Mooi River, Natal, where he is also domiciled.' It seems that she was still hopeful that they could be reconciled and was perhaps trying to get him to return to England, after all it was she that charged him with deserting her. The petition continues with the plaintiff's plea that her conjugal rights be returned to her or she will press for a divorce claiming alimony at £20 per month plus her costs. A judge's note on the front of the document states, 'filed in default of appearance' so presumably Gott had no intention of defending the action. At a further hearing on 9 December, it was ordered that Gott provide her with money to return to him at Farningham and that if he did not do so she would be entitled to a provisional decree of divorce. She had reduced her claim for alimony from £20 to £10 per month.

On 16 March 1925 the little party returned, on the *Balmoral Castle* from Natal via Cape Town and Madeira to Southampton. She was accompanied again by Mrs Julie Smith also of Didlington Hall and now described correctly as a housewife aged 49 – 19 years older than Mavis. She had been to court, the two could not be reconciled and she was granted a provisional divorce until 6 April 1925 when it became final and she was awarded alimony of £10 per month. They had been married for almost ten years. In later life Mavis gives 1925 as the year that 'something happened' which prevented her from having children but gives no further explanation.

Gott had been put on half pay in October 1918 on account of ill-health caused by wounds and ‘on completion of a period of five years' he was placed on retired pay with the Military Cross for conspicuous courage in action and the 1914 Star with claps and the two war medals. On 1 June 1928 he is recorded as sailing on the SS *Baradine* from Durban to London, as a retired army officer aged 35 giving his London address as c/o Standard Bank of South Africa, Northumberland Avenue, London and on 29 September he made the return trip on the SS *City of Palermo* first class from London returning to Natal.

In the May 1950 edition of *The Ostrich* the proceedings of the South African Ornithological Society Captain GE Gott is described as a committee member and further down the list is a Mrs GE Gott of Mooi River a fair indication that he did remarry. Gerald Gott died in South Africa on 26 July 1966 at the age of 73.

4. Henry Burton Tate 1925

Henry Burton Tate was born in Liverpool on 4 October 1883. His grandfather, also Henry, had established the company, Henry Tate & Sons, in 1859, in the city of his birth. It would later merge with another firm, Abram Lyle & Sons, to became the world-famous sugar refiners, Tate & Lyle. After the business began to grow, Henry expanded the company to Silvertown, in East London and with the industrial fortune he accumulated, he founded the Tate Institute and the Tate Gallery in Pimlico, Central London. Henry had several sons, many of whom joined the business, including Henry Tate jnr, who became a director. They were a world beating outfit and their business expanded beyond all expectations. It was not a foregone conclusion that everyone born into the family could join, however, and at least one relative was judged 'too thick' to be employed. 'No family member was admitted unless thought worthy of it, and even then, he was subject to ruthless surveillance with the possibility of being pruned off if he wasn't found good enough'.

Henry Tate Jr married Grace Burton in 1882 and they had one child, whom they named Henry Burton – the third Henry in the line, but at least by giving him a middle name of his mother's maiden name, it distinguished him from the two proceeding Henrys. On the 1891 census, when he was seven years old, Henry Burton, and his two-year-old brother Arthur Wignall Tate, were staying with Henry jnr's brother William a 49-year-old JP, and his wife Caroline at Erriviatt in Denbighshire, along with his uncle, the household included an aunt, eight cousins and 14 servants, including a butler, groom, coachman, and several maids. Shortly after this Henry was sent off to undergo his first taste of education at the hands of a Henry Gray Tylecote and his brother Charles of Golden Parsonage, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead who ran 'a school for gentlemen's sons', to 'prepare boys for the public schools' as the advert ran. Pupils were limited to 30 and the building stood in a park of 75 acres. The Tylecote brothers were the sons of Thomas Tylecote who had been Canon of Ely for 45 years and part of an ancient Bedfordshire family.

On 22 September 1897 at the age of 13 Tate became a boarder at Eton and at the time of the 1901 census he was living in Keates Lane near the school aged 17, while his parents occupied Bolney House, Ennismore Gardens, in the Knightsbridge area of London. Henry Burton's father died in February of the following year and his estate was valued at £725,129 17s 6d. a huge sum at the time. The settling of the will may have been one of the last connections, which Grace and Henry Burton had with the firm whose name they both bore. In 1903, the year after Henry Jnr's death, the company went public. In a history of Tate & Lyle, *Sugar And All That*… ' the author Antony Hugill writes that there was an oral tradition within the firm that the reason the firm went public was that one of the Tate widows wished to withdraw her investment, and Hugill suggests that it might have been Grace. Despite his surname and living off the money from it, Henry Burton was never employed by the company his grandfather had founded and for which so many of his relatives had worked. On the 31 July 1902 at the age of 18 he moved from Eton to Oxford.

In February 1904 he passed as 2nd Lieutenant 4th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry aged 21. This was the most junior commissioned rank normally held for one to two years when officers complete special arms training relevant to their corps. In October 1904 he was

summoned for reckless driving along Bicester High Street, Oxfordshire at a break-neck 15-18mph! He also failed to produce his driving licence and was convicted and fined. During 1905/06 Henry made a number of trips to Canada seemingly for the purpose of 'travel' but the duration of his visits are not known. As far as we know he had no official connection to the Tate & Lyle company and it is difficult to work out what he did, the few references discovered describe him as a 'gentleman', 'no occupation', 'working in the city' or 'connected to a noted publishing house', whatever it was, shortage of money did not seem to be a problem.

Ida Legge *The Tatler* 1909

His life changed when on Thursday 22 July 1909 he married society beauty Ida Gwendolen Legge. She was given away by her father, Robin Humphrey Legge, once the music critic for the *Daily Telegraph* and probably the most widely known music journalist in London as well as being a composer. Henry was 26, and Ida was 21. His address on the marriage certificate was Bolney House, Ennismore Gardens where his parents had lived, and the ceremony took place at Trinity Church, in Sloane Street, Chelsea, at 2.30 in the afternoon. They went to live firstly at Aldwickbury, Harpenden, then 6 Herbert Crescent a newly built mansion block in Knightsbridge.

Billesley Manor

Their first child, Antony Henry, was born in May 1910, and baptised at the Holy Trinity in Sloane Square, Chelsea. On census night 2 April 1911 he was ten months old and staying with his maternal grandparents and a nurse at 33 Oakley Street, Chelsea. His parents have not been found on the census so quite possibly they were out of the country having left the baby with relatives. In 1912 Henry purchased Billesley Manor, an ancient and magnificent house in the market town of Alcester, near Stratford-upon-Avon, in the Cotswolds with 550 acres.

Henry Tate at Warwick in 1914

Once referenced in the Domesday Book, the grounds feature an eleventh century church and an ornate topiary garden, which was planted to replicate a chess board. It was here that Shakespeare put ink to paper and wrote *As You Like It*. Some historians also believe that All Saints Church, in the grounds, is where Shakespeare married his wife, Anne Hathaway. The Hanbury-Tracy family sold Billesley to Henry, who installed a substantial new staircase with a first-floor minstrel's gallery. He also excavated what he believed to be an ancient barrow in the grounds only to discover that it was the 18th century burial chamber of a much loved Billesley horse.

In January 1913 Henry was elected one of the vice-presidents of the Warwickshire Agricultural Society and on 4 May 1913 another son, Robin David, was born, by which time Henry and Ida were firmly settled at the manor. The following year, 1914, like most men of his generation, HB Tate went off to do his duty. The Great War began on 28 July 1914 and on 5 August 30-year-old Henry was mobilised as a Lieutenant in the 1/1st Warwickshire Yeomanry and had his photo taken at Warwick Castle. Most of the officers were recruited from universities and public schools, sometimes becoming officers without even an interview, contemporary George Gillet was offered a commission while playing cricket with a colonel and told that any of his friends from Harrow could have commissions should they want.

Within a couple of weeks, the Warwickshires were in Egypt arriving on 24 April. In the summer of the following year they were shipped over to Gallipoli for service as dismounted infantry landing at Suvla Bay on 18 August 1915 and went into action at the Battle of Scimitar Hill, on 21 August. The regiment remained there until withdrawn at the end of October, suffering heavy losses. Henry was made up to captain in 1916 and came under the command of the Australian Mounted Division in February 1917. They went on to serve in Palestine as cavalry, seeing action at the first and second Battles of Gaza, during March and April 1917 and took part in the charge at Huj in Palestine on 8 November putting a Turkish infantry brigade to flight and capturing 12 field guns and howitzers. The regiment also saw action at the Battle of Mughar Ridge and the Battle of Jerusalem during the same month. From July 1918 the Yeomanry served as machine gunners on the Western Front. Henry was awarded the three standard war medals but apart from having survived the horrors of Gallipoli nothing has been found about his other war years which was probably uneventful as he was not really a military man and presumably got out as soon as he could. Henry was a patient at the Military Hospital at the end of February 1918 with what looks like an 'inflammation of the inner ear'. Interestingly he is entered as Lieutenant but there are no further details. His medal card asks for his awards to be sent to Billesley Manor, Alcester, and in 1920 Henry become a Warwickshire JP.

On 1 May 1919, Ida gave birth to their third child, a daughter, Julia Elizabeth Mary which was perhaps the final act of the marriage, as later papers show, marital relations had ceased in 1918 - three years before she was known to have begun an affair. In the census of 1921 Ida and daughter Julia are shown as living at 1 Wilton Crescent, Westminster along with eight female servants of various descriptions but there is no mention of Henry.

According to Henry's divorce petition Ida had been 'acquainted' with an Edward Littleton since at least March of 1921 'a guilty affection' sprang up between them and they begin an affair. Littleton was initially a friend to both of them and according to the petition they met on five or six occasions at Billesley in these early days but once his suspicions were aroused Henry had his wife followed almost continually. In the spring of 1922 Henry put the house up for sale, but there seems to have been little interest and indications are that Ida was still living there despite the pair not having lived as man and wife for the past three or four years – but with nineteen bedrooms, five bathrooms, 550 acres, and other properties on the estate, avoiding each other could not have been much of a problem. The electoral rolls for 1920-1925 show both Henry and Ida registered at the manor. In December of 1923 he found a letter from Littleton in 'affectionate terms' in his wife's bag. He put the letter back but instructed his wife to have nothing more to do with Littleton. In February the following year he found another letter but did not tell Ida and took it to his solicitor to have photographed and returned

'Darling Heart - Bless you for my two lovely letters on Friday. They woke me up, and made my 'flu' better. I'm going off to sleep again. Nighty - night beloved. Wonder what I will dream of about you. Hope you're enjoying your party, darling, I'm going to finish this off quickly before I talk to you again on the telephone.
Bless you precious darling'.

On 20 February 1924 Henry sailed off to Canada 'on business' according to one of his travel documents but what this was about is not stated, he returned on 18 March but no sooner had he returned than he sailed off to the US for a while but whatever his reasons for leaving the country when his personal life was in such turmoil, he kept up or maybe even increased the surveillance on the errant pair and this was possibly the reason for him being away so much - give them enough rope… Henry returned to Southampton on 15 November 1924 on board the *Majestic* from New York. Ten days later, on 25 November 1924 having gone through the latest information from his agents, Henry filed a petition for divorce listing numerous cases of the pair meeting from 1921 – 24 including one memorable occasion when 'on the 16th March 1924 the said Ida Gwendolen Tate committed adultery with the said Edward Thomas Walhouse Littleton during a journey in a taxicab between Old Compton Street in the County of London; Barnes in the County of Middlesex and Oakley Street, Chelsea.' It must have been quite a ride.

The case was heard intermittently throughout the year and into the next with an application in 1924 by Ida that she be permitted to visit the two boys which was granted with her being allowed to see them twice during the school period up to August. On 4 February 1925 Henry was granted a *decree nis*i from Ida on the grounds of her adultery with Littleton. Under the terms of the settlement the two boys were to stay with their father, but Ida retained the right to visit them. She was awarded £1,000 per year with a further £300 for four-year-old daughter Julia, apportioned monthly for as long as she stayed with her mother. On 19 August the decree was made absolute and both parties were free to follow their inclinations – which they did with remarkable rapidity. With Gerald Gott leaving Mavis and the UK for South Africa in 1922 and Henry Tate having difficulties with his marriage from 1918 the two had plenty of time to get to know each other before their marriage in 1925. Mavis was of course free any time after 1922 when Gott left her but presumably the relationship had been strained long before then.

Three days after their divorce was finalised, on 22 August Henry aged 42 married Maybird Hogg aged 32, and not to be outdone, Ida Legge aged 38 married Lieutenant Commander Edward Thomas Walhouse Littleton RN (retired) the son of the Hon. Edward Littleton of Hatherton Hall, Cannock, Staffordshire. Littleton was aged 25 and they married in Chelsea a few weeks later on 5 September. Littleton was an interesting character who joined the navy at 13 in May 1913 and was promoted to ŀieutenant in January 1921 followed by automatic promotion after eight years to the rank of lieutenant commander. Various service reports describe him as extremely hard-working and who carried out his duties in a most satisfactory manner although sometimes quick tempered and lacking in tact when dealing with the men. He could play the piano and speak French and Italian. He was placed on the retired list on 19 December 1922 but recalled at the outbreak of WW2 when he was 39. Their marriage was to last until 1951 when they divorced and he married a Kathleen Whitechurch the following year, he died in November 1969 and Ida in 1970. Billesley remained unsold and in March 1926

Henry advertised 150 acres of grass keeping (ie short term rental of land for cattle) to be auctioned at the manor on 15 April, 'property of Capt. H Burton Tate.'

On the 10 September 1926 the three Tate children docked at Southampton on board the SS *Hamburg* having returned from Cherbourg. All three gave their address as Billesley Manor – no parents are mentioned the boys, aged 13 and 16 travelled first class, possibly with a schoolmaster, while seven-year-old Julia was in the second class with a nurse and maid. Possibly they were they sent off on some educational trip while their parents sorted out their new partners and organised the sale of the house. As late as 15 October the electoral roll shows Henry and Mavis registered to vote at Billesley - the directory was out of date as the house and estate had been sold the previous month.

Writing in 1939 with reference to the year 1925 Mavis states that, 'I was told 14 years ago by three doctors that as long as I lived, I could never hope to be on my feet for more than one hour a day.' What the problem was has never been explained.

In 1924 a Major Everard Hanbury JP, OBE owner and occupier of Watership House, Sydmonton, a small village in Hampshire near Newbury, died in a hunting accident. In due course his house was put up for sale and Billesley having been sold at the end of 1926 Henry would have had money in his pocket and by the time the electoral roll for 1929 was published they were registered to vote there. Henry also kept the London house, 48 Great Cumberland Place Westminster W1 and he seems to have had an interest in 5 Portsea Mews, Hyde Park. Towards the end of 1928 he was left 6,000 shares in the Great Western Railway worth £1,878 (about £120,000 today) and if he hadn't already paid for Watership this would certainly have helped towards it. The pair were on the electoral register there for 1929 and at Great Cumberland Place as Maybird Constance Tate, Captain Henry Burton Tate and Miss Alice Baker during 1930 and then back at Watership for 1931. It was around the end of 1930 that she changed her name from Maybird to Mavis and knowing her reputation for wit it is hoped that this was a conscious play on words - avis being the Latin for bird but this of course pure conjecture.

There was an interesting court case during March of 1930 when chauffer and parlour man Samuel Nicholls along with a woman calling herself Emmeline Nicholls a general cook, were charged with offering themselves as servants to Mrs Maybird Constance Tate, wife of a company director of Cumberland Place using a false certificate of character. It emerged that Nicholls had a number of criminal convictions but on this occasion his main aim was to elope with Emmeline as they both had families elsewhere. Mavis was looking for a trustworthy couple to take charge of Watership House and had already sent them there before discovering that their references were false and having them arrested. Nicholls was fined £10 and Emmeline was bound over.

5. Early Political Career and Tragedy

Mavis's route to serious political activity is not known in detail but she had been involved in the activities of her cousin Douglas Hogg (later Viscount Hailsham) during his parliamentary

campaigns in St Marylebone as the Unionist candidate a seat which he held from 1922 until 1928 and in 1927 she was elected chairman of Ward 3 of the Marylebone Conservative Association. Politics was in her blood, she explained to one journalist at the time, her great-grandfather was an MP for 40 years and she was the great-niece of Quintin Hogg, it is not hard to believe that such an intelligent woman would be unable to stay at home as housewife and mother to three stepchildren and a husband who appeared to have no particular political affiliations.

Viscount Hailsham

Her dedication must have paid off as in February 1931 Mavis was selected as the Municipal Reform candidate for Islington West at the London County Council elections. This group was active in London from 1906 and allied to the Conservative Party, standing on a platform of reducing council debt and supporting the provision of electricity by private enterprise rather than being financed by the council, they were also in favour of denominational schools and stood in opposition to the Socialist and Liberal candidates.

The election was held on 5 March and Mavis proved herself adept at dealing with hecklers saying that she, 'likes addressing meetings and simply loves being heckled!', and although she was beaten by the Labour candidate, George Bryant Naish she managed to reduce his majority from 2,000 to 400. Naish was born in Bethnal Green the son of a Bristol-born compositor and followed the same profession. He had represented Islington West on the London County Council since 1928 and continued in that role until 1949 as well as representing the Barnsbury Ward of Islington Borough Council from 1919 and serving as Mayor of Islington during 1936-37. Despite not being elected it was a great result for a political novice and she must have impressed the Tory party as the East Hull Conservative Association were hoping that she would stand for a seat in their constituency. She declined the offer and the eventual winner was John Nation and ex-army officer who defeated the sitting Labour MP. Having rejected Hull, she decided to try her luck closer to home and in July 1931 she was selected by the executive committee of the West Willesden Conservative Association to stand for that constituency. 'I have taken an active interest in politics ever since my cousin, now Lord Hailsham, stood for Marylebone,' she said during interview with the *Sunday Times* that August.

Once her candidacy was announced she was interviewed by the *Kensington Post* who described her as possessing a striking and forceful personality who takes a lively interest in women's questions particularly infant welfare and maternity. Mrs Tate was said to have more than an ordinary understanding of the doctrines of 'advanced Conservatism', to know the socialist creed from A-Z, and to be in every sense a staunch imperialist. It was said that her examination before the executive was a gruelling affair but that she distinguished herself by her ready and wholly convincing answers to a searching series of questions. She explained that winning West Willesden would be her 'chief object in life',

> You see, I'm a woman candidate, and if the seat is not regained for the conservative cause there will be many who will be only too ready to say that if we had a man as a candidate we would have won and that in spite of the fact that I may have worked just as hard as any man, and I am going to work hard as I will practically live in the constituency. I really must win West Willesden.

Lady Rennell Rodd, said that she knew Mrs Tate quite well and that,

> She spoke for me quite recently at the Dorchester on behalf of the Empire Activity Fund and as a result of a fine appeal the subscription list was really magnificent. She is a very brilliant young woman who has made an exhaustive study of the questions of the day and is particularly interested in the development of our overseas trade. I have found her most sympathetic and tactfulness itself. She is a tremendously hard worker; she proved that when at the London County Council election, she worked like a Trojan. In

> fact, as a woman candidate the West Willesden Executive could not possibly make a better choice. She is not hampered by family ties, so that she can give her whole time to work and that is very great advantage.

In a speech shortly after adoption she treated the audience to her views on cookery,

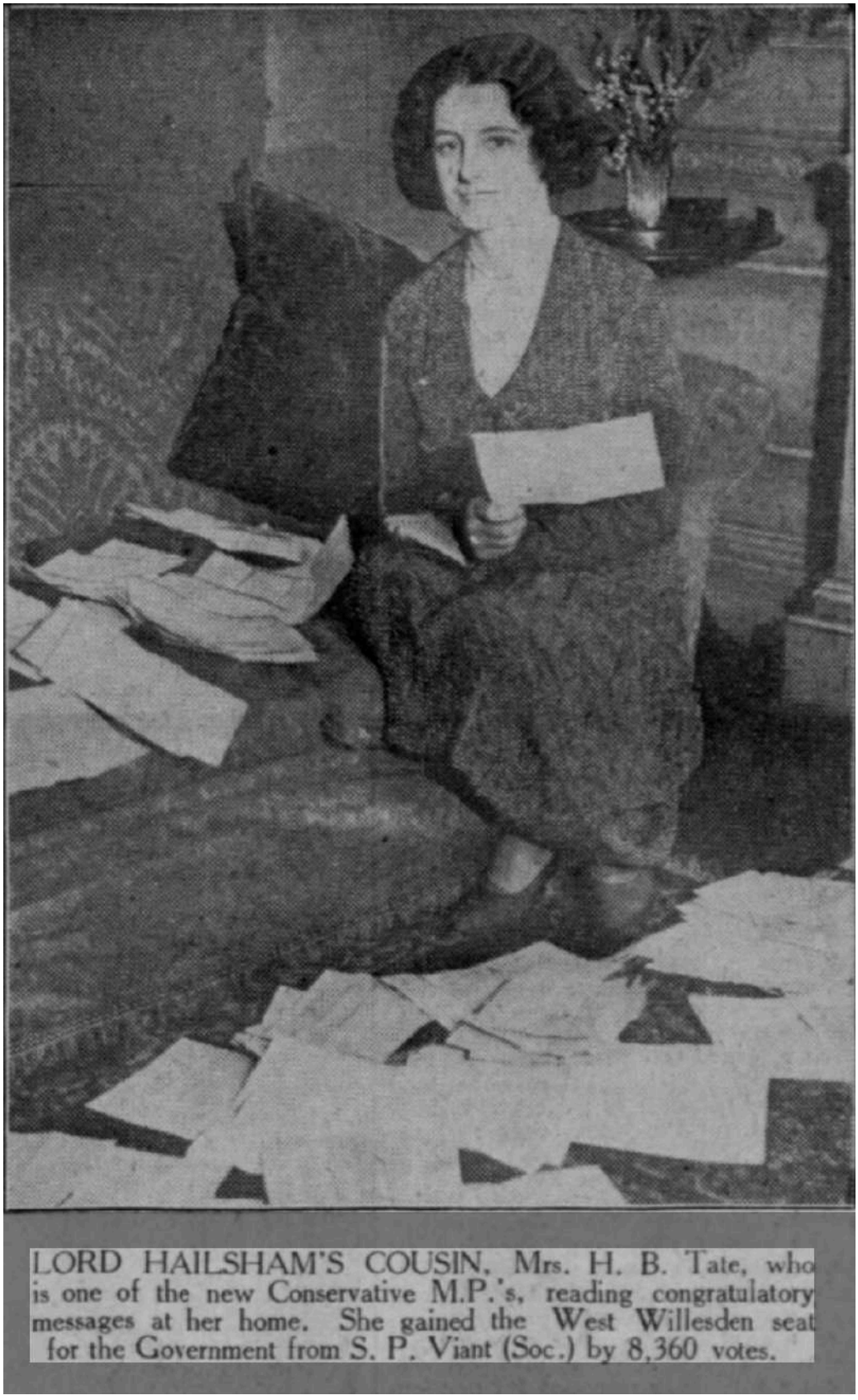
> Half the problems of discontented homes would be solved if women understood cooking. Some of them do not know how to feed their children and their menfolk and one cannot get stronger healthy children or contented husbands unless they are fed properly. Dietetic values ought to be more understood by the average housewife. We should study domestic science in all its branches as far as possible.

According to the Electoral Register taken in October of 1931 the total number of men eligible to vote was 13,908,745 and women, 15,614,947 giving women a majority of 1,700,000. On 7 October Parliament was dissolved and at the general election on the 27th, Mavis was elected as MP for Willesden West displacing Labour's Samuel Viant, the Assistant Postmaster General and a 'well liked moderate' who went back to being a carpenter in South London. Viant had been elected with 7,000 majority two years before and Mavis won by a majority of 8,360 votes in what was a landslide for the National Government formed only two months previously after the collapse of the second Labour government. 'I had expected to get in by quite a small majority and when they told me that I had an 8,000 majority I could hardly believe it', she said afterwards. The Conservatives won 470 seats with the Labour Party gaining only 52 MPs and the Liberal Party, split into two factions managing only 68 seats between them.

Mavis Tate November 1931 (The Sketch)

By any reckoning it was a stunning result and when Parliament reconvened on 3 November Mavis took her seat with 14 other women MPs - 13 Conservatives, 1 Liberal and 1 Independent.

society magazine the *Sketch* featured a full-page portrait of her on its front cover by photographer Pearl Freeman under the heading 'A New Daughter for the Mother of Parliaments' giving a brief note of her ancestry and political history relegating pictures of the other nine new women MPs to its inside pages. The *Yorkshire Post* featured a picture of her perched on the edge of a sofa surrounded by a mass of congratulatory messages under the heading, 'Lord Hailsham's Cousin.'



LORD HAILSHAM'S COUSIN, Mrs. H. B. Tate, who is one of the new Conservative M.P.'s, reading congratulatory messages at her home. She gained the West Willesden seat for the Government from S. P. Viant (Soc.) by 8,360 votes.

Mrs Tate MP opening her mail 1931 (*Yorkshire Post*)

Towards the end of November, she was due to attend a dance at Mapesbury Hall in Willesden Lane to raise money for the local hospital but sent a telegram,

> Deepest regret that owing to being confined to bed with bronchial catarrh I am able to attend the dance tonight in aid of Willesden General Hospital. Please extend to committee my sincerest wishes for a successful evening.

In early December she was booked to open a bazaar in Harlesden but had not recovered sufficiently to attend and her place was taken by her mother-in-law Grace, assisted by one of her stepsons and daughter. Feigning illness to avoid tedious social engagements is of course not unusual but such was her dedication to everything she did that it is unlikely to be true in this case. Mrs Tate had developed a very loyal following, so much so that a club was formed the, 'T8 (Tate) Ladies Club' an organisation of women principally in the College Park area who had been a great help to her during the campaign but open to women of any political affiliation. It had an initial membership of 100 with the aim of getting together over a cup of tea, meetings were to take place every fortnight from October until July - with no speeches. Unfortunately, she was still not well enough to attend the first gathering but had recovered enough to present a turkey and, accompanied by her husband, took part in a fundraising whist drive in Harlesden just before Christmas. She had yet to speak in the chamber and her victory celebrations were to be eclipsed by a devastating event at the end of the year.

On Boxing Day morning, Saturday 26th having been waved off by Mavis, Harry Tate began the journey from the family home in Great Cumberland Place, to his country residence, at Watership House near Newbury. In the car with him were his two sons from his previous marriage, Arthur Henry Tate 21 and Robin David Tate aged 19. At around 11 o'clock they had reached the London Road in Staines when their car skidded and overturned while overtaking on an S bend. The two boys were trapped underneath and were found to be dead when the car was lifted. Harry was taken to the Staines Cottage Hospital and was allowed home after treatment for head injuries and severe concussion. A member of the household was contacted on the following Sunday and is quoted as saying that, 'Mr Tate has no idea of the cause of the accident except that there was a skid on a wet road. There was no other car near'. He was still suffering from very bad concussion and was unable to give a clear account of what happened. The inquest was held on Tuesday 29 December in front of the deputy coroner Dr JS Crone. Harry Tate did not attend as his head injuries rendered him unfit and he was suffering from shock; it was stated by his counsel that it was uncertain how long his recovery would take and Dr Crone did not think it worth adjourning the proceedings as there was half a dozen independent witnesses in attendance and the case went ahead.

Frederick Ridgdale, the Tate's chauffeur who identified the bodies and had seen the party leave the London house, described Tate as a very careful and accomplished driver who was familiar with the road. Peter Farquharson of Buckingham Gate gave evidence to say that around 11.00 am he was driving at about 35-40 miles hour when Tate's car began to pass him and as his bonnet edged in front the car appeared to skid. 'I think it must have hit the kerb as it turned to the off side and I think it made the back of the car turn around. That had the effect of making the car turn over. I applied my brakes at once and this caused my car to skid. The road was very greasy. I'm sure that the cars did not collide, there was no mark on my car'. The witness

was able to state that he could see three people in the other car, two in the front and one in the back and that he rendered all the assistance he could after the accident.

Cyril Hills of Knightsbridge said that he was travelling towards Staines when Mr Farquharson's car passed him and a few seconds later a grey car with three occupants came along. As Mr Tate's car approached the first car it was well over to the offside on the S-bend and the road was quite clear. Suddenly, the two cars seemed to come together and when he reached the spot he saw the second car roll over into the ditch having turned completely around so that it was now facing London. He fixed a wire to the car and dragged it out of the ditch. The two young men were underneath the car, and he could just see their faces. Mr Hills added that the back tyres of Mr Tate's car were smooth with hardly any tread on them. Dr Crone asked if Hills thought the manner in which the car was driven was at all dangerous.

'Oh no', he replied 'It was the wet road that caused the skid. It was not dangerous driving. I would have done the same thing myself.'

James Aslett, a labourer, said that he was at his front gate when he saw the two cars coming from London, the one behind seems to be swaying before it caught up with the other and just as it passed the first car it turned sharply in. The rear wheels skidded as it turned and the car hit the kerb with the front wheel which caused it to somersault sideways into the ditch. It was about 20 yards in front of the second car. Aslett was asked if there was any suspicion of a collision and he replied that there was not. A member of the coroner's jury asked if the car appeared to be skidding before it reached the other car. 'Yes' replied Aslett 'he was trying to right himself, I should say, and he could not'. Dr Mann gave evidence to say that he was called to Staines Cottage Hospital between 11.30 and 12.00 on Saturday where he examined the two deceased. In his opinion death was consistent with having been caused by a car overturning resulting in fractures of the skull in both cases and that death must have been instantaneous. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death and found that no blame could be attached to the driver. The obituaries of the two young men in the *Eton College Chronicle* describes them as keen sportsmen, Robin was the better athlete although practically blind in one eye. Antony having completed he studies at Cambridge was employed at Price Waterhouse and highly thought of.

Mavis announced in early January that Henry had shown some definite improvement since the accident but that she was taking him away to the country for a fortnight to rest and recover. Within an hour of her return, she attended a meeting and spoke at the National Unemployed Workers Movement in Willesden.

6. 1932-34 The Member for Willesden

Mavis was the second woman MP to arrive at the House of Commons when it reassembled on 1 February 1932 arriving before 7.00 am behind Miss Graves the Conservative member for South Hackney. Arriving early to ensure that they got the seat of their choice they were both outdone by the Liberal member for Bristol North who had arrived at 6.30 the previous evening a good 15 hours before the start of proceedings. There followed a rush by 42 members many of whom had been waiting in the library all night dozing in the deep leather armchairs in the hope of getting a decent seat. Although there are over 600 MPs there are only 427 seats. Mrs Tate appeared in deep mourning and received much sympathy from all parts of the house for appearing just weeks after her stepsons were killed and her husband injured.

It had long been the custom of the House that new members did not participate in proceedings in the chamber (for example, by asking a question) before making their maiden speech, which is usually uncontroversial and fairly brief, including a tribute to the member's predecessor, irrespective of party, and favourable remarks about the constituency. It is a tradition that such a speech is heard without interruption and that the next speaker praises the new MPs first contribution.

On the way to Parliament

It was the eleventh of the month that Mavis first spoke in the House, defying convention even at that early stage in her career by asking the Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Samuel, if he would consider introducing legislation to require persons acting as agents for the adoption of children to hold a licence granted by him, and was he aware of cases were children were taken abroad in return for money. Apparently, Sir Samuel was not but stated that he would be happy

to consider the matter further if the facts would be laid before him. She followed this up with a question to the Minister of Health, Sir Hilton Young, asking him how many houses had been completed since the Housing Act of 1930, to which the answer was 1,214. It was not until the following day that she made her maiden speech during the second reading of the 'Children and Young Person's Bill' which hoped to broaden the powers of the juvenile courts and establish working conditions for young people leaving school or working part-time. It also sought to establish the principle of the supervision of young people, when outside the family and place this firmly in the hands of local authorities. On the advice of Lady Astor, she spent nearly every morning during the preceding fortnight in the children's courts and planned a series of visits to homes and institutions for delinquent children. Confessing beforehand to her friend and fellow MP for Dundee Florence Horsbrugh that she was, 'miserably nervous' Mrs Tate rose to speak,

> The diffidence with which I rise to make my maiden speech is slightly mitigated by the fact that even the most die-hard misogynist in this House will admit that the matter under discussion is one upon which a woman has a right to speak. I have given considerable time and study to the matters dealt with in this Bill. It should embody the knowledge gained by practical experience in the working of juvenile courts and the probation system which were in their infancy when the law of 1908 was passed. Juvenile courts have proved their immense value in dealing with the young offenders, but no one who has had experience of them can fail to agree that there is immense scope for furthering their activities. Under the present Bill it is set down that no juvenile court is to be held in a building mainly or exclusively used for police or adult court proceedings, except with the permission of the Home Secretary. I should like to see the Clause extended, where such permission is given, to ensure that these courts are held either on a different day or at a fixed time, and that they should in no case follow directly upon the hearing in the adult court.
>
> I stress those points for two reasons: Firstly, it is very undesirable that the children should be kept waiting long hours before their cases are heard; secondly, it is making an undue call upon our magistrates to expect them to wait long hours hearing evidence in an adult court and then to go, very often with no interval, straight to the juvenile court, where the psychological atmosphere should be entirely different. The success of juvenile courts depends so enormously on the magistrate who deals with the cases. I think that London is to be congratulated in that it has a special rota of magistrates to deal with these juvenile cases, and I am very glad to see the recommendation that this system should be extended to the rest of the country. But I would like to suggest that some stipendiary magistrates, who have had years of experience in the adult courts in London and other large cities, should be set free for duty entirely in the juvenile courts. I know that this suggestion has not had the recommendation of the Departmental Committee which has been largely responsible for the framing of this Bill, but I also know that it would have the approval of many of the magistrates in this city.
>
> I wish very strongly to deprecate the practice requiring police officers to appear in plain clothes when attending the children's courts. I fully realise that that is done with the intention of making things easier for the children, and that is exactly where I think it entirely fails. Our children are not frightened by the police. They do not regard the police as their enemies. They go to them to be helped across a road. They very rightly look upon the police as their friends. Our police have magnificently earned this tribute from the children. I think that everything possible should be done to encourage children to regard the law as their friend and protector. I do not believe that by bringing policemen in their ordinary uniform, to which the children are accustomed, into the juvenile court, you will engender in the child any sense of fear. On the

contrary, I believe it would be easier for these children to be natural and to tell the truth in front of officers whom they recognise in their uniform, than it would be if they saw what must appear to them a strange man bringing charges against them.

Before I leave the subject of juvenile courts, I would like to say that I thank that everything possible should be done to urge on the parents, on the children and on the police, the view that these courts might be applied to when guidance and help are desired and that there is not necessarily any disgrace attaching to the fact of having been there. It is because I feel very strongly on this subject, with regard to the little children, that I am sorry that no provision has been made in the Bill to allow for three courts. I think it would have been possible to arrange for children's courts for little children, up to the ages of 15 or 16, to be held in the juvenile courts as at present constituted. I believe, then, that young people from 16, say, to 19, could have had charges against them heard in the adult court, after applications for summonses, without the public being present, and before the holding of the adult court proper.

I do not wish to urge this change if there is any danger of wrecking the Bill by doing so, but I feel strongly upon the subject and if it is not possible to incorporate such an arrangement in the Bill, then, with very great regret, I should be compelled to oppose the raising of the age in these courts. Much as I dislike the idea of trying young people of over 16 in the adult courts as at present constituted, I think that if we raise the age, we shall spoil the atmosphere of the children's courts. It will be very bad for little children to come into close proximity with young people of 16 or 17 who may very well have begun to become hardened offenders. The influence of those young people on the children may be quite as disastrous as the influence of the adult offenders upon the young people. I am against raising the age from another point of view. I believe there may be a real danger of older criminals approaching these young people and endeavouring to influence or train them to do part of their work for them by saying, 'After all, if you are arrested you will only come before the juvenile court and you have not much to fear.' I do not think the treatment meted out to the child who is, in many cases, only naughty, or only mischievous, is suitable to these young people of 16 and 17. With regard to the approved schools, I deprecate the provision that all children shall be sent to these schools for a period of three years. In many cases of neglected children, the parents have not been able to look after them. They have perhaps fallen into very low circumstances, and the child is neglected in consequence. If the child is sent to an approved school for one year, during that year the father may get employment or the mother may get into a better state of health, and the parents may then be in a position to look after the child. I think it is a pity that, in such cases, children should have to be sent away for the whole period of three years. The old idea of revenge against the criminal is dead. We now wish to help the criminal to reform, but you will not help young people of 16 to reform by lack of discipline. You will not teach them by those means to become free and happy citizens. On the contrary you may render them for all time the slaves of their own ungovernable impulses.

There are just two other points in the Bill on which I wish to touch. The first is with regard to that part of it which deals with infant life protection. I think that those Clauses are most inadequate There are societies in this country at present into which it would be of very great advantage to have exhaustive inquiries made as to how they look after homeless and illegitimate children. The Home Secretary yesterday in reply to a question was kind enough to ask me to supply him with information with regard to these adoption societies and I expect a heavy increase in my postal expenses within the next week. There is one admirable adoption society. The National Children's Adoption Society of Sloane Street is quite beyond praise, but I wish to see Clauses which would protect those unhappy little children from other societies which are much less particular and much less disinterested.

> In conclusion I regret the omission from the Bill of any provision for the examination and observation of young offenders on remand in special remand homes. This was one of the strongest recommendations of the Departmental Committee which suggested that at least three such homes should be provided by the State. The need for such homes is widely recognised, and in the Bill which was introduced in July, 1930, it was provided that every person up to the age of 21 convicted in a court of summary jurisdiction should be sent to an observation centre while awaiting trial or sentence. The advantages of such a course must be obvious to everyone. If this provision has been dropped for reasons of economy, I hope that His Majesty's Government will find it possible to reconsider the matter because I think that the economy is a false one.

Delivered, 'with a voice as pleasant to the ear as her appearance was to the eye, and views evidently formed after a long study and much experience were advanced with a persuasiveness which at once captured interest and attention', the House was captivated by such a maiden speech and the woman herself, 'Mrs Tate is a pleasing and sympathetic figure, reserved, refined, modest, with something wistful and spiritual in her face. Her exceptional paleness, almost ivory in tone, contrasted with the darkness of her black frock. She spoke without gesture in a slight but clear liquid voice. Both bearing and voice made an impression and gave a remote unworldly charm to her penetrating and sympathetic discussion of juvenile courts and other such matters.' She was frequently cheered by all sections of the house while Henry watched from the special gallery and the Bill passed to the committee stage where it would be examined in detail.

Her debut month in the House of Commons was cut short by illness once more. On 26 February it was reported in the press that a 'sudden indisposition' had caused her to cancel all public engagements and the mystery ailment continued until at least the end of the first week of March but by the 24th she felt well enough to resume more of her activities and gave a three-minute talk at the Willesden Schools Athletic Association dinner in Holborn. Despite her apparent recovery she felt too ill to attend a two-day housing exhibition at the Forester's Hall in Kilburn and after her return to the House in early April she was described as still in mourning dress and looking pale and very frail. At a meeting of the Willesden and Cricklewood branch of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection on 18 March members were advised by the chairman, 'Don't send one letter to Mrs Tate, your MP, simply bombard her with letters until she supports your Bill in the House of Commons.' Back in her district she began holding a surgery on every alternate Monday from 6.00 to 8.30 at the party offices 71 Craven Park Road in Harlesden from February 15th.

Mavis at her desk

A little light relief was brought into the house in April when, as part of the debate on the 'Children and Young Persons Bill', Mr Lovat Fraser attempted to introduce an amendment describing 'aerobatic dancing' which included doing the splits, toe dancing, and American tap as both dangerous and cruel for young children. This provoked laughter from Mrs Copeland and when Fraser continued reading from a poster advertising lessons in American musical comedy, tap dancing and opera at one shilling per lesson, Mrs Tate called out *Splendid!* and the amendment was dropped. At the beginning of May 1932 Mavis was interviewed by the *Lincolnshire Echo* along with other women MPs about their first six months in Parliament. The journalist described her as, 'Womanly and petite, with dark eyes and prettiest brown hair, the member for Willesden is one of the best looking of the women members of Parliament.' He continues that, 'in her serious way she told me of how much of one's conscientiousness parliamentary work demands. 'You have to work tremendously hard both in Parliament and in your own constituency. You must devote all your waking hours to it. It is no use doing otherwise. Everything else must be secondary. At least that is my opinion. I read every letter and every postcard myself and I have a heavy post. Being in Parliament is a great investment of power in a woman to help others. People should feel able to rely upon you.' The journalist continues, 'then she was called away and I watched her disappear into the lobby, a graceful figure in the black-and-white of mourning, for not once, but several times, has bereavement touched her life since October; each time with tragic suddenness'. The reference was to the death of her cousin Edward Marjoribanks, author and MP for Eastbourne who committed suicide by shooting himself in the chest at Lord Hailsham's house in Sussex during April. Mrs Tate expressed her views on the question of lotteries particularly in relation to hospitals saying

that she had consulted many eminent medical men who were very much against it as it would do a great deal towards killing off the voluntary hospital system as subscriptions would fall off enormously. She was also opposed to Sunday Cinema's Bill which aimed to increase facilities available for Sunday entertainment on the grounds that it would be disruptive of family life.

The order of business during May included a speech on the cotton industry during which she pointed out that two thirds of the industry's operatives were women and argued in favour of a protectionist policy with regard to foreign imports. There was a disagreement over the partiality of coroners' courts when it was suggested that, 'if the motorist is a local notability they give some curious verdicts. A licence should be re-granted, not after a mere coroner's inquiry, but after a proper official inquiry into the whole case'. Mrs Tate responded, 'May I suggest that the hon. Gentleman is making disgraceful allegations against coroners' courts? Half the motor accidents in this country are due to the surface of the roads, and anyone with motoring experience knows that that is true,' Having passed through its committee stage the 'Children and Young Person's Bill ' was returned to the House on 12 May and an amendment to limit the working hours of young people proposed by Lady Astor gave rise to a long debate which continued until 4.30 the following day when it was finally passed by a huge majority. The press commentated that 'Mrs Tate, the dark Madonna-like Conservative member, spoke several times in her calm style and once chided very impatiently, movers of an amendment of which she approved, who did not press it to a division.' Mavis supported an amendment to allow offenders of 16 years and upwards to be tried in the ordinary courts rather than the juvenile courts as there had been a large increase in crime by persons between the ages of 16 and 21 since 1927 and the juvenile courts were more concerned with education and welfare than punishment. The clause was heavily defeated but gave rise to a memorable exchange when her friend Lady Astor referred to a former MP, now in the House of Lords as 'the late Mr Fisher' a comment which was immediately jumped upon by other members who interrupted with,

'He is alive!'

Lady Astor: 'I mean 'late' to this House. When people leave this House they are dead for me.'

Miss Cazalet: 'What about Lord Astor?'

Lady Astor: 'That is perfectly true. He is practically dead most of the time'.

A week later, on the 18th, she asked the Minister of Health whether, in view of the need for houses to be let at working class rents, he will consider modifying the conditions as to floor area and density per acre required in connection with subsidised houses. The minister replied that specifications were set down in the Housing Act of 1924 but that he was always prepared to consider an application from local authorities to vary these dimensions if appropriate. On 22 June 1932 Mavis contributed to a debate on the 'Health Insurance Bill' opposing a motion which she believed would have deprived women of some of their insurance rights once married. She considered it unfair that having had to pay into a fund since the age of 16 they should automatically be deprived of those entitlements once married as was being proposed. Despite the House being divided beyond party lines the motion was defeated by 246 votes to 43 and

Mrs Tate was congratulated on her spirited contribution. On the 30th she opposed a clause in the 'Sunday Entertainments Bill' which would establish a cinematic fund under the control of the Privy Council and which would be funded by money taken from charitable institutions and which would absorb all sums paid to licensing authorities with the aim of, 'developing kinematograph as an instrument of entertainment and instruction'. Her not unreasonable view was that it would become a subsidy for dull films that nobody wanted to see.

July 15th was the 88th birthday of Charlotte Despard one of the founders of the Women's Freedom League a breakaway group from Christabel Pankhurst's Women's Social & Political Union who believed in non-violence and a party was held at Caxton Hall to celebrate the event. Many women MPs and old comrades sent in messages of support and appreciation, but Mavis bothered to turn up in person and gave a speech saying what a great honour it was to be there to express the gratitude of women of her generation which owed her so much today. She had done such a magnificent job for women in the past and,

> …every day she was more impressed by the tremendous power that women possess. It would be a terrible thing for the world should women misuse that power. Their work must be for mankind, both men and women as a whole. It was often said that women have won their battle, but no one could share in public work today and fail to realise that the woman's battle is in its early stages, indeed it was only now beginning. The present economic position of women is critical.

She paid a visit to the Heinz factory in Harlesden examining its 57 varieties and having lunch in the canteen with the workforce before taking a rare holiday abroad. Expanding her range, in early August she gave talk on the wireless in the 'This Weeks Good Cause' slot, which took the form of an appeal on behalf of Willesden General Hospital raising over £200 in donations during the first week. Before the broadcast she had spent a whole day there in the company of the chairman and secretary finding out how things worked. At the end of September, she agreed to take part in a series of lectures at Palm Lodge in Reading and gave a talk on the Children and Young Persons Bill on 12 October. Shortly after, the T8 Ladies Club, received a telegram from Baden in Germany apologising for being not able to take part in an outing to Hindhead as she was abroad looking after her husband who was undergoing a cure for nerve trouble. Her message read, 'Wish you all a jolly afternoon. Mr Tate pleased to say much better. Hope to see you all after October 16th.'

Parliament re-assembled after its break on 18 October, and it was widely noted that Mrs Tate had again arrived at 7.30 am in order to get a good seat but many Liberal MPs had been there all night in order 'foil a Tory plot' to take over the best places. Always keen to get to the nub of political debate, the press commented one evening that she had appeared in the House of Commons 'wearing an evening gown of black velvet which touched the ground as she walked'. Mavis rounded the year off by accusing the Postmaster General of misleading the public by advertising that a telephone could be had for 2/6 per week but not mentioning the deposit.

1932 did not end well. Just before Christmas she began to feel very ill and was taken to a nursing home for observation, initially it was hoped that an operation would not be necessary but on 6 January she was admitted to hospital with acute appendicitis and underwent an operation followed by a second on the 17th after which she was said to be as well as could be

expected and returned to the nursing home before retiring to the country to recuperate, not appearing in public again until early April when she attended a social evening of the Willesden Conservative Association accompanied by her husband.

In an April edition of *The Vote*, the magazine of the Women's Freedom League, Mavis took part in an interview which occupied the front page saying that the most critical questions in her constituency are unemployment and housing. She was not convinced that the present Housing Bill would do much to alleviate the problems it was supposed to address and she had set up a fortnightly surgery to offer advice to people of any party and organised a canteen where a good hot meal was provided at 2d per person. 24 May was of course Empire Day and Mavis took part in many activities particularly visiting schools on the theme of bringing the Empire closer together.

During the following months she continued to take part in debates which included the Road and Rail Traffic Bill, Unemployment Insurance, and in July opined that, *'*…it would be a good thing if child welfare and maternity books were placed in every church and register office to be given out with the marriage lines,' in an address to the Maternity and Child Welfare Conference in London. All this of course was combined with numerous garden parties, talks whist drives and social engagements of various kinds. With Nancy Astor she voiced strong opposition to a private members bill which would entitle a person to divorce their spouse if they had been judged insane for a period of five years. There were parties for various dignitaries at Cliveden, the Astor's mansion on the Thames and in August she and her husband hosted a garden party at Launde Abbey near Leicester for some poor children from Stepney, under the London Children's County Holiday Scheme. They were, apparently, 'conveyed in lorries followed by a romp, fun, tea and buns.' Other trips involved a fortnight in Rutland from which the children returned 'very fit and bronzed'.

On 13 October Mr and Mrs Tate returned from another short trip to Germany before moving into their new house at 39 Cadogan Square which was to be their permanent address. Mavis was dogged by ill health throughout her life, but in October she was forced to cancel all engagements when it was her husband's turn to undergo an operation for acute appendicitis. Although described as dangerously ill he recovered and received frequent visits in his nursing home by Mavis on her way to the Commons and it was not until 10 November that he was described as out of danger but not expected to leave the nursing home before Christmas.

In December she again gave forthright of views in the debate on the Licencing (Standardisation of Hours) Bill.

> Personally, I do not wish to see the hours of drinking extended, and I would not support this Bill unless it was very drastically amended, but I should like to see one definite hour all over the country when the public houses would close... You cannot create desirable behaviour entirely by legislation. It has to be done by education. I think that the temperance reformers, if they are as keen on the public life of the nation as they say they are, would be very well advised to spend more energy, time and money on seeing that people in this country have a greater knowledge of the dietetic values of food and of how to cook it when they get it. I firmly believe that if our women and girls were brought up to be better cooks there would be a great deal less

drinking in this country, and that that would do far more to check drinking than the opening of public-houses until 11 o'clock will do to increase it.

In the end she supported the Bill on the grounds of regularising hours and ironing out certain anomalies and the House voted by 101 votes to 67 that licensing hours in England be extended and standardised as from 11.00am to 3.00pm with a two-hour break from 3.00pm until 5.00pm and the reopen at 6.00pm until 11.00pm.

On the night of December15/16 during a sitting which began fairly innocuously with the Newfoundland Bill debate moved on to the highly contentious Unemployment Bill. In total the House sat from 2.45pm on Thursday until 1.30 on Friday afternoon, the longest sitting since 1907. The socialists kept the unemployment debate going with arguments for increased payments for distressed areas and went through several divisions and heated arguments. Prominent amongst the long stayers was Mrs Tate and the other female conservative MPs who despite being described as looking like 'washed out rags' seemed to go through the ordeal much better than the men. A little later, showing compassion for her less advantaged constituents Mavis spent over two hours, contacting the Home Secretary and making arrangements to allow a man serving three months in Pentonville Prison to visit his five-year-old son who was dying of meningitis; this was in response to a phone call from the Labour Party agent in Willesden who had been made aware of the case The prisoner and his wife were allowed to sit at the bedside of his unconscious son Pat for an hour at Park Royal Hospital, Willesden. On a brighter note the T8 Club was going from strength to strength with the Christmas party in Kensal Rise attended by more than 300 people.

In February 1934 Mavis found herself at odds with the Minister of Health who she accused of carrying out a slum clearance scheme in Harlesden at an incredibly slow pace when people were living in insanitary conditions and great poverty. The scheme had been submitted by the Conservative Council which had lost power in October. There was to be two parts to the scheme, the first involving 1,046 people in South Kilburn and the second in Kensal Green which necessitated the improvement of 3,400 houses in which 35,000 people lived. The second part was not scheduled to begin until 1938 and would take five years. Mrs Tate had visited two areas which she described as a black spots and found the situation to be absolutely appalling and a lengthy enquiry was conducted into the situation. She took part in debates on aerodromes, the Road Traffic Bill, for which she was co-opted on to the standing committee, and the during this period. Following low turnouts in Parliamentary by-elections Mavis supported the Representation of the People (Disfranchisement of Negligent Electors) Bill which proposed fining people 5/- if they failed to vote, 'unless I receive from you either satisfactory evidence that your failure to do so (ie vote) was due to illness, disability or other reasonably unavoidable cause or a fee of 5/- in lieu thereof, before July1st next your name will be omitted on the list of electrons to be published on August 1st next' read the proposed notice. Those eligible to vote were advised to spoil their papers if they did not like any of the candidates.) and despite most of her female colleagues disagreeing; the House voted in favour of the Bill being introduced by 90 to 76 but when it was properly debated it was thought to be largely unenforceable and expensive and was not proceeded with.

In May of 1934 Mavis found time to attend a celebratory luncheon at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington to mark the opening of the Corona fruit drinks factory which was in her

constituency at Park Royal. She presided over the opening ceremony of the Willesden Unemployed Welfare House where the guest speaker was Lady Hailsham but the event was disrupted by local communist leaders who shouted continuously that the proposed occupational centres were the beginning of the 'enslavement of the unemployed', and the meeting had to be brought to a premature end. Afterwards, outside the centre, Mavis stood on the roof of her car and addressed the large crowd and the communists. She allowed Mr Hine, their leader, to use her car roof as a platform to express the views of his party for ten minutes but he outstayed his welcome and had to be, 'hustled off'. When Lady Hailsham and Mrs Tate drove away they were cheered by the crowd. The centre was started by voluntary workers and equipped by public subscriptions. Viscountess Hailsham stated after the meeting: 'About a score of communists succeeded in reaching the back of the hall. They seemed to imagine that it was a political meeting. There were not many but they were extremely noisy'.

7. The German Adventure 1934

One spring afternoon in 1934 about a week before Whitsun which fell on Sunday 20 May that year– Mavis and fellow MP Nancy Astor were taking tea at the House of Commons, accompanied by a male guest that the latter had invited. The middle-aged, broad-shouldered, blue-eyed visitor had a shocking story to tell and as Mavis sipped her tea she listened intently ~~as~~ the tale unfolded. Their visitor was Herr Gerhardt Seger, a German who had been a Social Democrat Party member of the Old Reichstag and secretary of the country's Peace Society. On 28 February the previous year – 1933 – less than a month after Adolf Hitler had become the Chancellor of Germany, and the morning after the burning of the Reichstag, Seger, along with many other SDP members, communists, and other political opponents of the Nazi Party, had been seized on his way to work. After three months of 'preventive arrest' and despite no charges being brought he was interned at the newly opened Oranienburg concentration camp for his outspoken criticism of the new extreme right-wing regime, he was a lithographic operator by trade and had served in five German Parliaments.

Herr Seger had spent several months in the camp, before he managed to escape in December 1933. He made his way to Czechoslovakia before arriving in England in mid-March. Once here, he oversaw the English translation of a book that he had written about his experiences and then embarked upon a lecture tour; not only to publicise the book but also to explain what life was like in Germany under the Nazis. Details of his own experiences in Oranienburg included descriptions of the two kinds of punishment cells that existed there. These were made of stone and the first type, the 'better sort' as this former inhabitant called it, measured ten feet by twelve feet, with the only opening being a small two-inch square in an iron door. Far more terrible, were the two feet by three feet tomb-like cells, within which men were imprisoned for various periods. Along with this, he supplied details of constant beatings with rubber truncheons from the guards, awful food, and times when men were compelled to walk in a circle barefooted for as many as 17 hours until they fell to the ground from sheer pain and exhaustion with their feet bleeding and bruised. Although a staunch socialist his views were strongly anti-communist and Seger stressed to the various audiences he addressed and in press interviews that there was a wide divergence of opinion between the German Social Democrats

and the country's Communist Party – stating very clearly that there could never be any relationship between the two. At the same time, he warned English socialists against any thought of compromise with communism.

Although he thought himself lucky to have escaped unscathed - one escapee from the camp had been shot immediately upon recapture, after landing in England, he discovered that his wife Elizabeth and their young baby daughter, Margarate Hedwig Renate, had been detained and were now being held at Rosslau Concentration Camp at Dessau. Frau Seger was the only woman among 600 men and her detention was in retaliation for his escape and subsequent revelations, with the aim of forcing him to return to Germany; something he had no intention of doing as this would mean almost certain death. The media coverage surrounding the plight of Frau Seger and her baby – now imprisoned for five months – had galvanised several women's societies into action and they had begun lobbying anyone they believed could help in her release.

After hearing Herr Seger's story – and liking to 'investigate things for myself', Mavis Tate promised to help. This was no hollow politician's promise and within days of meeting Seger at the Commons, and on her 'first free day' the MP for West Willesden boarded an aeroplane and flew to Germany to as she had said, ' see what I could do.' This 'feminine pertinacity', as one newspaper called it, was a regular trait which revealed itself again and again throughout her personal life and professional career.

Mavis claimed in newspaper interviews upon her return that she had flown to Germany without a single introduction, but it is quite possible that there were some behind the scenes contacts that she was reluctant to disclose, she also had the advantage of speaking German. As we have seen the catalyst for her journey was her friend Lady Nancy Astor and her husband, Waldorf. One of the groups that the Nazis had begun vilifying after coming to power, was the Christian Science Church a religious group advocating the use of scriptures in practical health matters and every-day situations. It had been conceived by Mary Baker Eddy – an American – while convalescing from a spinal injury caused by a fall. She believed her physical recovery had been 'a consequence of ideas that had come to her when she had turned to the Bible [and so one] purpose of her new religion was to try and restore to Christianity its potential for healing the sick.' Eddy had written a book outlining her beliefs, which she called *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures.* Nancy's mother had a copy, and a great aunt had been among one of Eddy's earliest disciples. Although initially unconvinced by the new sect, after reading the book and after a particularly severe bout of ill-health, Nancy embraced the new religion and persuaded her reluctant husband Waldorf to do likewise and after his own dose of chronic sickness – a severe attack of sciatica, he became an ardent convert to the movement.

In Germany during the previous year the Church of Christ, Scientist, had been accused by the Nazis of distributing Marxist propaganda, along with their advocation of the scriptures. In response to this, the Church's board of directors decided to send a delegation to Germany and asked Waldorf to lead it and so in September 1933, he travelled to Berlin and had a meeting with Wilhelm Frick, the Minister of the Interior. The upshot of their meeting was that if Christian Scientists kept themselves away from politics and stuck to religion, they would remain undisturbed. Before Waldorf left Germany, he had an interview with Hitler himself which although it lasted only twenty minutes, made him one of very few Englishmen to meet the Chancellor and future dictator at such an early stage. Possibly this previous contact between

Frick and Waldorf helped pave the way towards negotiations for Frau Seger's release we do not know, but whichever official had been her initial contact it seems from her own account that the interchanges were fraught with tension and 'extremely difficult'. However, things were about to take a turn for the better, in the form of a larger than life, but controversial, figure, who Mavis would refer to in post-trip newspaper interviews as 'Herr Hanfstaengl' and it was he who had eventually 'intervened on their behalf' as she put it.

Ernst Franz Sedgwick Hanfstaengl, universally known throughout his life by the nickname 'Putzi', (meaning little fellow – he was 6'4") was born on 2 February 1887, to a German father and American mother. His birthplace was Munich, which at the time was the capital of the Bavarian Kingdom within the German Empire, and he was born into 'one of the most prominent and well-connected families in Bavaria'. His grandfather had been a pioneer in art reproduction and was later savvy enough to realise the opportunities that the development of photography offered. He opened his own photographic atelier (studio) in 1853, and subjects included Kaiser Wilhelm, Queen Victoria and the composer, Franz Liszt. His son, Edgar – Putzi's father – built on the wealth, social status and reputation which had been established and as part of this, opened branches of the business in New York and London. Putzi's mother, Katherine, was no less impressive in her pedigree. Her father – William Heine – had fled from Germany, after the failed 1848 revolution, and ended up in America. He was 'an architect and celebrated illustrator who had worked on the Paris Opera. He became a general during the American civil war and after President Lincoln was assassinated, served as one of the pallbearers at his funeral. Putzi's maternal grandmother also had connections with the civil war, her uncle was General John Sedgwick, a national hero of that conflict whose statue stood at the Officers' Academy at West Point, and, as a member of the Sedgwick family, she was part of a leading New England clan.

While Putzi was growing up, his parents entertained the cream of Munich society, as well as Mark Twain, Buffalo Bill Cody and Richard Strauss, - his godfather was Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. A succession of British nannies tried to instil in him 'good manners' and he was taught piano by the famed Hertha Hauptmann Emmerich as well as other instruments, but his true talent lay with the piano and this was recognised very early on. His formal education included time at the Royal Bavarian Wilhelmsgymnasium, the oldest and most prestigious school in Munich and during his first year there, his form teacher was Gebhard Himmler, father to Henrich, who was destined to become one of the leading Nazis and head of the SS. He later crossed the Atlantic, to attend Harvard University and while there, as well as being invited to the White House, he composed several songs for its football team. He graduated in 1909 and after spending some time back in Germany, returned to America to run a branch of the family business on Fifth Avenue.

Putzi Hanfstaengl 1934

Putzi became homesick and returned to Bavaria in 1922, and it was here, as a favour for a fellow Harvard graduate working in the U.S. Embassy, that he attended a Nazi party rally and heard its leader, Adolf Hitler, speak. ‘What Hitler was able to do to a crowd in two and a half hours,’ he would later recount, ‘will never be repeated in 10,000 years.’ He quickly became one of Hitler’s most intimate followers and a close personal friend; a friendship that would benefit the party leader in many important ways during his ascension to power. It was at Putzi’s house that Hitler was given refuge after the failed Munich Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, and Putzi’s mother bankrolled the Nazi Party through some of its darkest financial days.

Hitler was arrested for treason after his failed coup and sentenced to five years imprisonment but released after only nine months and the two resumed their friendship. Hanfstaengl was of particular interest to the Fuhrer because of his contacts amongst the rich and influential in Britain and the US, he became instrumental in helping to build the Nazi Party and its ideology. Hanfstaengl helped to finance the publication of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the Nazi Party’s official newspaper, the *Völischer Beobachter* but perhaps most important of all were the introductions he provided to Munich's high society throughout the rest of the decade, and the help he gave in polishing the future dictator’s image. Hitler enjoyed listening to Putzi play Bach and Wagner on the piano and Peter Conradi's 2005 biography of Hanfstaengl is entitled: *Hitler’s Piano Player*. He has also been credited with devising the chant 'Sieg Heil' translated as ‘Hail Victory’ as well as a number of pro-Nazi songs and marching tunes. By the time of Mavis’s arrival in Germany Putzi was head of the Nazi Party’s Foreign Press Bureau in Berlin due to his established friendship with Hitler and his wider connections among the influential members of high society. Not everything was rosy in the Hitler-Hanfstaengl camp however. Several disputes had arisen between Putzi and Germany’s Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, which through his Machiavellian manoeuvring saw Hanfstaengl ousted from Hitler’s inner circle. Ever the contrarian he had continued to irritate and make enemies by ignoring the increasingly strict party protocols and disciplines, doing things very much his own way. This, along with exaggerated rumours about his loyalty spread by his increasingly jealous enemies, made his position progressively precarious. He spoke fluent English and is believed to have met Churchill once in 1932.

By the end of 1933 as Goebbels, Goring and their ilk formed an impenetrable clique around their leader and after months of open persecution against political opponents, Hitler’s former confident and ardent follower was beginning to have a change of heart towards his former idol. He was to say of his growing disillusionment at this time that: ‘It was the experience of power that turned Hitler into an unrestrained sadist . . . in the course of 1933, I gradually realised that the devil had got into him.’ Despite his misgivings Putzi still had a job to do within the Third Reich, and with his more liberal and internationalist views Mavis could not have met a better person to assist with her mission. There is a possibility, given the wide circle of associates that each possessed, that they had met previously possibly at Cliveden, the Astor's residence, during one of the many parties there. There were strong rumours that Ribbentrop had been a guest at the estate denied by Lady Astor who sputtered with indignation. 'Ribbentrop has never been to Cliveden and he came only once to St James [the Astor's’ London house]. Then he gave me the Nazi Heil-Hitler salute and I said ‘Stop that nonsense with me.' and I never saw him again'. Adrian Fort in his book *Nancy: The Story of Lady Astor* takes up the tale.

In March 1936, a few days after the German invasion of the Rhineland, Nancy Astor threw a party at 4 St James's Square. As well as being the first woman MP (elected in 1919), Astor was a legendary hostess. To this particular dinner party, she invited various League of Nations delegates, the American and Russian ambassadors, an assortment of English friends and Hitler's 'ambassador-at-large', Joachim von Ribbentrop. She placed Ribbentrop next to her at dinner. After the meal, she announced some party games, whispering to the English guests that they must let the Germans win. The actress Joyce Grenfell, who was Astor's niece and a connoisseur of Nancy's humour, was there 'What do you suppose Aunt N did after dinner? Made us all play musical chairs. She really is a remarkable woman, for who else could think of such a thing? Some of the older ones stood by thinking, no doubt, that the English are mad, quite mad. But they smiled benignly and were amused. After this, group conversations took place'.

Nancy and Waldorf also regularly entertained Neville Chamberlain. 'Back from Cliveden. Lord! What a party,' Chamberlain recorded in his diary after one weekend. 'For a long time I disliked Nancy intensely but ... now I have come to regard her with something like the tolerant affection one feels for a warm hearted, merry and sometimes naughty child.' At one Cliveden gathering, not long after the Anschluss, Mrs Neville Chamberlain threw herself into Nancy's after-dinner games, getting down on all fours as she pretended to be Battleship, the horse that had won that year's Grand National.

The Cliveden set was ridiculed in *Reynolds News* as a kind of upper-class pro-Hitler cabal. 'For 18 months,' the paper reported, 'Cliveden has been the centre of friendship with German influence.' There was some truth in it. After his merry game of musical chairs, Ribbentrop reported to Hitler on the likelihood of England and Germany forging a lasting agreement. He singled out the Astorgruppe as one of the circles 'that want a fresh understanding with Germany and who hold that it would not basically be impossible to achieve'.

Nancy herself, however, was irked by the view that the parties at Cliveden represented any kind of pro-German conspiracy. And in her defence, she was no Diana Mosley. Waldorf may have been one of the first in Britain to meet Hitler face to face, but it was not from any love of National Socialism. Waldorf wrote to the *Times* to defend the Cliveden house parties and to insist that he and 'Lady Astor' were 'no more fascists' than communists: 'To link our weekends with any particular clique is as absurd as is the allegation that those of us who desire to establish better relations with Germany or Italy are pro-Nazis or pro-Fascists.' Like many in their circle, the Astors were very conscious of the heavy burden the Treaty of Versailles had imposed on Germany and feared, as many did, the anarchy of another Great War. Yet much of what seemed to be pro-German bias in Nancy's thinking reflected instead a deep hatred and suspicion of the Russians on the one hand and the French on the other.

Whatever the truth of the matter Hanfstaengl and Mavis both had many friends within the upper echelons of international society, and in fact it might have been strange if their path's had not crossed. The families certainly knew each other as during June 1934 Putzi received invitations to two events, in America. The first was his Harvard class reunion and the second, was possibly the most prestigious wedding of the year. When his 'Tiffany's of New York' engraved invitation arrived, it read simply: 'Please present this card at Trinity Church Saturday the Thirtieth of June.' He was one of 250 guests drawn exclusively from America's most patrician families. The wedding was between the bride Ellen Tuck French – grandaughter of Amos Tuck French a relation of the Vanderbilts –and one of America's most eligible bachelors, 21-year-old John Jacob Astor VI a Harvard graduate and relative of Nancy's husband Waldorf,

the son of Colonel John Jacob Astor, who had been, before going down on the Titanic – one of Hanfstaengl's own family's closest friends.

In Mavis's favour, apart from her renowned tenaciousness and attractiveness, was the fact that Hitler and the Nazi Party were still very keen to attract positive foreign press coverage. Germany had not yet completed its awful transition from democracy to dictatorship and as one author put it:

> The Nazi regime, which closely monitored foreign opinion, was acutely sensitive about critical reports, [and] were concerned about reports filtering back to the Third Reich (where foreign papers remained on sale), even more pressing was their concern about Germany's standing abroad. In 1933 and into the first half of 1934 its position was still weak, and Hitler had to tread carefully on the international stage to make other leaders believe his guise as a man of peace – a difficult enough feat even without the stream of reports about atrocities in Nazi camps.

Gerhardt Seger's public denouncements of the regime and camps – in both speech and print – had merely added several more column inches to the hundreds of articles and reports that had appeared in newspapers and magazines within the previous year. When it was discovered that Seger's imprisoned wife and 20-month-old baby had been labelled 'political prisoners' and allotted numbers (57 & 58 respectively), one newspaper called it 'the height of absurdity' and a Nazi PR disaster seemed on the cards. It was obvious that a mutually beneficial outcome of this highly emotive matter had to be sought either from Putzi himself, or someone else in authority. All the negotiations had been carried on behind the scenes, totally unknown to Frau Seger and difficult or not they bore fruit. After an anxious wait Mavis was told that Frau Seger had been released the previous Saturday (19 May). Elizabeth and Margarate had been escorted out of the Rosslau camp and returned to their home.

During her week-long visit Mavis was invited to inspect Oranienburg concentration camp, the scene of Gerhardt Seger's imprisonment and escape and given a tour of the site. The town of Oranienburg, just north of Berlin, was one of the first places to have a concentration camp run by the Nazis. It was set up by a local SA (aka 'Stormtroopers') unit on 21 March 1933; on the side of an old brewery. It held 40 inmates initially but by the time Seger was interned there, a couple of months later, it had been placed under district state administration and by August held almost a thousand prisoners in its confines, making it among the largest of its type. Conditions within these early camps were almost universally dreadful and Oranienburg itself became especially notorious for its violence. From the very beginnings of these camps – and Oranienburg especially – Nazi PR had to work overtime in their attempt to get across to the German people and the foreign press – their sanitised version of a place where prisoners enjoyed 'decent, human treatment', sanitary conditions were adequate, labour was 'neither degrading nor exhausting' and, at the end of the day, prisoners could even be found 'lazing comfortably in the sunshine' with cigarettes in hand. As part of these orchestrated publicity campaigns, German state officials held press conferences for foreign journalists and correspondents, as well as organising visits to selected camps which had, of course, been meticulously prepared in advance. As the Nazis realised themselves, this high-risk strategy

could occasionally backfire, although at other times, it did achieve its aims particularly when it played on the fear of communism.

Mavis's visit to Oranienburg seems to have been well staged, as on her return from Germany she would tell the press she had found the camp 'well run'. This is obviously contrary to what she had been told before her visit, by Herr Seger, but it seems likely that she held back her true feelings in respect of the assistance Hanfstaengl – Putzi – had given her and, as the head of the Foreign Press Bureau, did not want to get him into trouble with negative comments. Besides, she probably believed that if anyone wanted to know the 'truth' about the camp, and those like it, they only had to listen to Herr Seger speak or read his book. Tellingly, however, and this was not lost on Mavis, she was not given permission to see Rosslau where Herr Seger's wife had been imprisoned.

Despite having been assured that Frau Seger had been released, Mavis was determined again to 'investigate things' for herself and on Thursday 24 May 1934, she caught the train from Berlin once more, only this time she headed south-west in the direction of the town of Dessau, famous as being home to the Bauhaus design school – built a mere nine years earlier –the 'hub of Modernism'. It was also home to the Seger family. Upon arrival Mavis found that the name of the road where Frau Seger lived had been renamed and it seemed that everyone, she stopped for directions, claimed they were strangers in the area and so could not help. After a search for a taxi proved fruitless, Mavis found the local police station and was eventually shown the correct address. On arriving at Frau Seger's home, Mavis might have been forgiven for assuming that the hard part was over but there was one more obstacle to overcome. During her captivity she had been told that her husband wanted nothing more to do with her after his escape along with many other cruel stories leaving her in a state of total bewilderment as to what to believe. In fact, Seger had considered divorcing his wife in the hope that this would secure her release but was informed that this would only take place if he gave himself up to the Nazis, and it was probably this which gave rise to the rumour of their estrangement.

Having convinced the Nazi Party, the determined British MP now had to somehow convince the German housewife – who spoke no English – of her good intentions and also of the urgency of leaving the country as soon as possible. Mavis rightly believed that her mission would not be successfully completed until husband, wife and baby daughter were reunited on non-German soil. All she had to convince the frightened housewife was the half a sheet of notepaper brought with her from England upon which Herr Seger had written a brief note and the name of their child. 'I told her I was an English woman who had come to help her and that she must leave Germany immediately,' Mavis told newspaper reporters. 'I was afraid she might have been suspicious of me, but she believed me and agreed to go. I told her that her husband loved her dearly and was waiting for the chance to meet, we packed up things and came to Berlin.'

Having allayed her fears to some extent on Thursday 24th Mavis, Elizabeth and baby Margarate took the train for the 80 mile trip from Dessau to the German capital of Berlin. On arrival at Anhalter station Margarate was crying loudly and both women looked pale and tired. In Mavis's case, she had only arrived in Dessau at 11 o'clock that morning and between then and now had tracked down the right address, convinced Elizabeth to come with her, sorted out several official matters– as part of the conditions of her release Frau Seger had to report to the police station each day – and then make it to the railway station, with mother and child, in order to make the 3.30 afternoon train to Berlin. At the same time, there was the small matter of how

she was going to get her travelling companions out of the country. Despite this, the ever-resourceful Mavis was able to announce to waiting press reporters, in a brief interview on their arrival in Berlin, that,

> 'We have secured a passport for Frau Seger this afternoon,' On then being asked what her immediate plans were, she replied with a smile: 'A cup of tea and a good wash. It is a tremendous relief to me to have Frau Seger here. Though she was released on Saturday it was only today that we were able to secure a promise that she would be allowed to go abroad if she desired as she had had to report to the police in Dessau every day. This German government are paying for tickets to England I consider that Herr Seger's release is an extremely gracious act on the government's part especially in view of Herr Seger's recent book on the Oranienburg concentration camp.'

Although Gerhardt Seger had, according to his own account, suffered greatly while detained, it seemed that his wife and children had fared much better. When asked about Frau Seger's time in the camp, Mavis was reported as having replied: 'Frau Seger was treated very well. She had a room to herself and the baby and could get anything she wanted for the baby.' Although everything now seemed to be in place, there remained an air of tension until 7.00am on the morning of Saturday 26 May, when the small group boarded the Lufthansa plane and it took off from Berlin's Tempelhof Aerodrome with free tickets provided by the German authorities. A Reuters' correspondent, two ex-patriots living in Berlin and a German woman, the newspapers would later report as 'faithful', comprised the small farewell party that saw Mavis and her companions board the plane and then waved them off on their journey across Europe and the English Channel to Croydon Aerodrome.

The Family Reunited

Even before the aircraft had taken off from Berlin people had begun to gather in anticipation of their arrival. As well as lining the aerodrome's perimeters, many had congregated on the roof of the administration building to get a better view. Herr Seger had flown from Paris to greet his wife; he had spoken to her briefly on the Thursday night, while she was still in Berlin, but this would be the first time that he had laid eyes on her for six months. When the aeroplane finally landed and its occupants stepped out onto English soil, a great cheer went up. An excited-looking Gerhardt Seger ran forward to embrace his family, his wife replete in a fawn-coloured travelling coat, before shaking hands with Mavis and thanking her profusely for making the reunion possible. As dozens of cameras clicked away, another figure made their way towards the small group. This was Mavis's mother-in-law, Grace Tate, who carried a bouquet of spring flowers. As she pressed them into the arms of her returned daughter-in-law, she explained that they were a gift from several wives and mothers 'in admiration of an act of great kindness successfully accomplished at a considerable self-sacrifice.' When asked by waiting pressmen if her task had been difficult, Mavis replied:

> 'You ask if my task was difficult'. she said with a smile, 'You simply have no idea how difficult it was. There were so many things to be overcome, apart from the more official side,

> Frau Seger had been told that her husband, who escaped from a camp at Oranienburg some 6 months ago, no longer wished to have anything to do with her. She had in fact been told all kinds of things and the poor soul did not know exactly what to believe.
>
> I had to persuade her that it was absolutely wrong and that I had brought to her a message from her husband and that he loved her deeply and was asking for her all the time. Her reaction to her release was just bewilderment. She showed no emotion whatever but I know that she is only too thankful to be back with her husband again. She was at first too completely numbed to realise that she was with him again'.

'Can Frau Seger ever return to Germany?' Mavis was asked.

> 'I know quite well that she cannot. Her passport is made out until August and I imagine that after that time she will lose her German citizenship'.

She was asked if she had, at any time during her brief stay in Germany approached the German Chancellor, Hitler himself. To this Mavis answered that she had 'gone through someone else' [probably referring to Hanfstaengl]: 'I don't know whether he went to directly to Hitler or not. I, personally never saw Hitler and I'm not sure whether he was actually consulted.' She described the experience has having been a great strain and was terribly glad it had all turned out so well. Herr Seger then addressed the assembled crowd: 'I can only say that I and my wife are indescribably grateful to Mrs Tate. It has been a long six months since I last saw my wife, just before my escape I saw her in the camp. She did not know that I was going, I was afraid to make trouble for anybody.' When asked if he ever intended to return to Germany, he replied with a laugh, 'No, I can shoot myself here!' One report stated that Hitler was so keen to know that Mrs Tate had returned to London that he instructed a number of the embassy staff there to await their arrival at the British airport and report to him once she was home again.

The small party set off for London by car, where the Seger family stayed for a week before leaving for Norway, to continue Gerhardt's lecture tour to promote his book. Seger eventually made his way to the United States where he continued to work for a Democratic Germany as a speaker and newspaper editor until his death in 1967. With her 'mission' now over, Mavis could return to her normal life, although her decision to go to Germany to help the Seger family was to have later ramifications.

The timing of her trip could not have been better as a fortnight after her triumphant return to England, Putzi – her colossal Teutonic saviour –travelled to the United States to attend the Harvard reunion and the Astor wedding and would not return to Germany for more than a month. At the same time, Hitler moved another major step closer in his quest for absolute power, while revealing something of his true nature. On 30 June 1934, the day the head of the Nazis' Foreign Press Bureau attended the wedding, close to two hundred members of the SA – the German Stormtroopers – including their leader, Ernst Röhm, were systematically rounded up, detained and then unceremoniously shot. For Hitler and his remaining inner sanctum this was a night of settling old scores. To history, it would become known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'. It is quite possible that if Putzi had not been away from Germany, would have become one of the victims. Close friendship seems not to have been any guarantee of protection, as the case of Röhm showed. As Berlin society reporter Bella Fromm, in her diary from that period,

recorded sometime in 1933: ‘I was told that Hitler has some sort of emotional fondness for the giant [Hanfstaengl] with his oversized hands. Just as he has for his old friend, Ernst Roehm (sic).’ Whatever ‘emotional fondness’ there may have existed between the two men in former times, it did not prevent Hitler from being present when Röhm was arrested, early on the morning of the final day of June, or later that evening when he ordered an execution squad to carry out his death sentence.

In terms of European stability worse was to follow. One consequence of the SA killings was that the German Army swore an allegiance to Hitler personally, something completely unheard of in the country’s history, and then, at the start of August, the elderly and ailing President Hindenburg died. After a hastily organised referendum later in the month, which went in Hitler’s favour, all presidential power passed to him. By the third day of September 1934, the night before the Nazis party’s annual rally at Nuremburg –captured in all its triumphant glory in Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Triumph of the Will* – Hitler held absolute power over Germany and its future. For the next five years, before the world was plunged once more into global conflict, the British political and social peacetime spheres would have the spectre of Hitler hanging over them and Mavis, through her ‘German affair’ had stood up to the Nazi regime and secured a victory, however insignificant it may seem in the great scheme of things, she had shown what could be achieved with courage, resolve, and determination.

Hanfstaengl was the subject of a bizarre incident in 1937 which he believed was an attempt at his assassination but the party leadership claimed was an elaborate joke. The world was to be told that he had been parachuted into Spain as part of a secret mission and had died a hero. He was picked up from his flat and put aboard a plane en route to Europe. But nothing seemed to make sense. The pilot recognised him and expressed surprise at what her had been asked to do (Putzi didn't even speak Spanish) and claiming that there was something wrong with the plane the presumably sympathetic pilot set down in a pine forest between Leipzig in Dresden where Hanfstaengl managed to give his captors the slip and made his way to England via Switzerland where he was interred at the outbreak of war before being sent to the United States via Canada as a useful anti-Nazi propaganda tool. In the September 1944 he was flown to the Isle of Man before being repatriated to Germany finally gaining his freedom in September of 1946. He died of throat cancer in November 1975 at the age of 88.

Author, Aimee Smyth played tribute to Mavis in her 1935 book entitled, *Austria, Land of Smiles and Tears.* 'A striking illustration of the value of languages is that of the rescue by Mrs Tate MP., of Frau Segar and her infant from a Nazi prison camp. The story is too well known to need repetition, and I will only dwell on these words of Mrs Tate when interviewed by the press, 'I had not a single introduction to anyone but I speak German.′ 'I suggest that Mrs Tate has the qualities of which diplomatic envoys should be possessed: intuition, courage, resourcefulness, tact and determination.'

Mavis in September 1934

8. Member for Frome 1935

After all the intrigue and excitement, it was pretty much business as usual back at the House for the second half of 1934. Mavis showed the sharp side of her tongue once more when a fellow MP made some derogatory comments about women drivers, 'With regard to the hon. Member's reference to an actress running down somebody, if he will refer to the Road Accidents Report, he will find that women have very much better records as drivers in regard to the safety of cars than men.'

In September Henry Tate obtained his flying certificate from the Airwork School of Flying at Heston Aerodrome and Mavis was well on the way to obtaining a license of her own, often to be seen taking to the air at Heston in pursuit of her initial 'A' licence. On 13 September Mavis and Henry sailed to America on the *Majestic* as the guests of 'American Airways' with ~~a~~ special permission to inspect the aerodrome's radio systems and the whole ground organisation. Their mission was to study every aspect of civil aviation. They flew all over the United States estimating that they had travelled about 12,000 miles inspecting existing airways and their operating systems. In mid-October she and Henry had a short break in Washington staying at the Shoreham Hotel before continuing their mission, being due to arrive back in England on 2 November aboard the *Berengaria* but were delayed by a week due to problems with the shipping line, causing them to miss an Empire tea in Melton Mowbray. By November she was competent enough to train for her 'B certificate' which involved flying blind and in all sorts of difficult conditions.

Heston Aerodrome September 1934

Mavis continued to lobby for the aviation industry throughout her career, and on one notable occasion during a debate on Air Services she totally bamboozled Sir Philip Sassoon the under-secretary for air with her technical knowledge of aircraft,

> Can we have the assurance of the minister that the question of aerodynamics will be taken into consideration in regard to speed; is he aware that in the Curtiss-Wright Condor machines, if the retractable under-carriage is left down the speed is lowered by 30 miles an hour, and that in the streamlined Vultee the removal of the 2 feet 6 inch streamlined radio mast increased the speed by seven miles an hour; and does this not prove that all that is needed is better aerodynamics which will increase economy?

The House roared with laughter at the length and content of the question and Sir Philip seemed puzzled as to what reply he should give and remained silent for a few moments. There was a roar of *Answer!* from all parts of the House. Sir Philip sprang to his feet and said,
'All those important questions will of course be taken into consideration.'
The house was again convulsed with laughter.

On 1 January it was officially announced that Mrs Tate was a Justice of the Peace for the county of Middlesex and she took her seat on the bench in the Willesden Police Court. Towards the end of March she became ill once more with a temperature of 104 and unable to attend the annual dinner of Willesden Borough Council. During a debate on the Post Office (Amendment) Bill in mid-March she opposed an amendment to delete a paragraph which proposed that a person persistently making telephone calls without reasonable cause would be liable to a fine of £10 or a term of imprisonment. In response she said that Mr Tinker who had proposed the amendment had overlooked the word 'persistently' and cited the well-known case of the person who rang up a subscriber named Smellie and asked, 'Are you Smellie?' and upon receiving a reply in the affirmative asked what he was going to do about it! Such a situation could be passed off once but if persistent was likely to cause irritation and in any event the magistrate had discretion if such a case came before them. The amendment was rejected.

In early May it became public knowledge that Mavis had decided to stand for election in the Frome Division of North Somerset in place of Viscount Weymouth who had decided to retire to pursue other interests. The move was prompted by medical advice with regard to her husband's health, it was recommended that a move to the country would do him good but she described herself as feeling, 'absolutely miserable at leaving West Willesden' having been a friend to electors of all parties and is perhaps creating a precedent by giving up a secure seat to contest one that was problematical, her husband's health was of the greatest importance she explained. Interviewed by a reporter from the *Bath Chronicle* after their recent move from Great Cumberland Place to Cadogan Square, SW1 she explained that she had not resigned from the West Willesden constituency as she was yet to be adopted as a prospective candidate for Frome. She outlined her position,

> I stand for supporting the National Government and the strengthening of ties with the Empire in every possible way; and I believe that in aviation we have one of the strongest weapons for forging the bonds of Empire. I intend, if adopted, taking a house in the Division or on the borders of it. I shall work extremely hard for the seat, and, whether defeated or not, I shall hope whatever the result to be readopted as their candidate afterwards. If chosen to fight I intend to

be their member. I know all about fighting from my experience at Willesden. I am always at my best when there is plenty of opposition! West Willesden was given up as hopeless by some of my predecessors, one of them retired with a nervous breakdown! None of them could ever get a hearing. I never give up, if I am beset by hecklers, but just stand there, for 20 minutes if necessary and I have never yet failed to deliver a speech.

When it was pointed out to Mrs Tate that the Frome Division was the second most scattered in the kingdom she replied,

I am fully aware of the advantages of mobility. My plans if adopted will be to go to Somerset in September as soon as the House permits my departure. I shall certainly live in the constituency as much as possible, but cannot afford to take a big house, it may be just a cottage. My husband has been seriously ill and it is necessary for him to spend some part of the year in the country. When I am in Somerset, every day of my life I shall go either to a farm or a coalmine in the morning, and I shall hold two meetings during the rest of the day. I mean to work like I worked at Willesden and I mean to be elected.

‘Will you actually go down coalmines?’

'What do you think? I intend knowing the whole life and all the problems of my constituency of course I shall go down mines, I shall be kept out of nothing in the Frome Division. My one passion is the air and our factories should be turning out three or four times the amount of aeroplane parts for export. Those who work in coalfields should realise that this branch of industry affects them considerably and helps to keep the coal mines busy.' Mrs Tate has a scheme which she is this week placing before Lord Londonderry the Secretary of State for Air. The object is to link up airways with seaways using harbours as landing grounds. The ultimate aim is installation of a two-day service to the Cape of Good Hope, a four-day service to Australia, and mere a 24 hour journey to New York.

Mavis was asked about her husband,

'Henry is not only recovering from a serious car accident of a few years ago but has also been seriously ill recently with appendicitis. He is now sufficiently recovered from this illness to resume work in the City but has been advised by his doctors to spend more time in the country for the sake of his health'. Mrs Tate describes his condition as her sole reason for considering a move to Frome and she and her husband have spent almost every weekend in the area in recent times. Mrs Tate's 16-year-old stepchild Elizabeth will stay with her father and stepmother if Mrs Tate comes to Somerset and takes a house or cottage. If she is adopted by Frome; West Willesden will miss her very keenly for she is a woman with an essentially practical outlook. 'She is a brunette of medium height and is a forceful speaker, absolutely dauntless and is often described as being in the forefront of fashion.

Her adoption for Frome was finally confirmed on the afternoon of Saturday 11 May 1935 at the Red Triangle Hut during a crowded and enthusiastic meeting attended by over 600 members. The Marquess of Bath presided and was supported on the platform by Viscount Weymouth, Major and Mrs Duckworth of Orchardleigh and her husband Henry Tate. During

her address to the committee she asked if she and her husband might leave the room during the vote as it is 'easier to vote against somebody if they're not there to see who does it', and expressed surprise at the number of people who had turned up at such short notice commenting that it is, 'partly a little curiosity from which as human beings, we all suffer and I think that curiosity might be a help fighting in the Division. People may come out to look at me just to see what kind of freak a woman member is.' (laughter and applause).

> ‘I do not want you to believe that I think a woman superior to men. Or that I should put myself forward as a women's member representing only women's interests. I do not think women superior to men or men superior to women and neither do I believe in equality of the sexes. I believe that men are born with all the advantages excepting strength. Women are the stronger sex which is about the only advantage I can think we have got. (laughter). I do not believe there is any such thing as a women's question because the men's and women's questions affect them both. They are the question of the family, and they should not be divided. Neither can do any good to the other if they are divided. I hope if I'm adopted, I should try always to represent the two.' (applause).

In response to questions Mavis stated that although she was a strong supporter of the National Government, she could not guarantee that she would always vote in its favour as there were questions during the last session of Parliament when she thought it right to vote against them. The committee retired to consider the proposal and Dr Fox the chairman, seconded the motion and made the point that the election could happen any time after October and that they needed somebody with experience which Mrs Tate had as well as being an extremely hard worker. She has shown her courage in the previous year in rescuing a Jewess out of one of the concentration camps almost under the eyes of Hitler. She was related to Lord Hailsham and would no doubt use her influence in getting him to come down and help fight the election, Quintin Hogg was her cousin and had assisted her by speaking at Willesden. The president, Lord Weymouth, described her as a very outstanding candidate and the proposal to adopt her was carried with only one dissentient, upon being called back into the room Mrs Tate made the following statement,

> You have given me a wonderfully kind and encouraging reception and I do assure you I will try in every possible way to fulfil the highest hopes you have. After all we are fighting not merely to get one human being back to Parliament; we are fighting for the safety and the future of the people of this country. We know that if this country went the Empire would go and I believe it is the greatest thing in the world has ever known, (applause). I have a very great cause for which to fight and I am sure together we will fight for it with all our hearts.

The successful meeting ended with prolonged cheering for Mrs Tate and Lord Bath.

With her future constituency assured Mavis returned to the fight in Parliament but would have to give up her regular attendance as a JP in the local magistrate’s court when she left the area. At the end of May and the beginning of June the Tates stayed at the Empire Hotel in Bath while they looked around for suitable accommodation, she got to know her new colleagues and familiarised herself with the district. Her first official engagement was at the Frome

Conservative Club where she handed out prizes for various sporting events and gave a talk on aviation and the need for Britain to be in the forefront adding that she had flown over the whole of America and was very impressed with how advanced they were when it came to aerial infrastructure, ground services, airfields and crew. She described the development of a new seaplane and mentioned that the inventor of this plane and many others, Igor Sikorsky, was staying with her at the time. Mavis described the seaplanes already in use between the United States, South America and China and said that that Sikorsky had in his safe' designs for a very much larger seaplane which would include two decks, a bar, ballroom and a flying range of many thousands of miles; she had been to the Admiralty and was trying to get similar machines constructed here.

On 6 June Mavis took part in the Commons debate on the National Health Insurance and Contributory Pensions Bill arguing in favour of a fairer deal for women and gave her opinion on the case of a farmer who had been sentenced to two months imprisonment for beating and abusing a boy of 18 sent to work on his farm from an approved school. In a marked departure from her usual humanitarian views, she asked whether in an offence such as this the 'cat' might be a more appropriate punishment. The following day she was in her element being involved in a debate on salaries and wages,

> The question really is one of principle. I believe that work should be done by the man or woman best qualified to do it, and that the pay should be commensurate with what the work is worth. But it is just as well to recognise, when we consider the question of women's work, that no one has ever objected to women working. They have always worked extremely hard. They not only ran their homes, but if we go back to the Middle Ages, we find that they also spun their cloth, worked hard on the land, brought up their children, and in fact produced or helped to produce most of the consumable products in the country. It is only when women begin to work for gain that the question of her work arises. That is a thing which it is just as well to remember when we are talking of women taking men's work. If we look back we find it was when men began to bake bread and sell it for profit, when men began to manage the heavy laundry machinery, when men began to produce by industry the consumable products, that it was first recognised that women had no right to work for gain. Therefore, do not let us talk only of women taking men's work, because obviously not so long ago it was the men who took the women's work.
>
> With regard to the Government's attitude, we can safely say that they have given perhaps the worst possible example, as regards equal pay. We know that with regard to the Civil Service, the teaching profession and everywhere where they have employed women, they have systematically employed them at a lower rate of pay than men. In spite of resolutions that have been passed by this House the position is steadily getting worse, with the result that you will inevitably have an increase in the number of women employed and a decrease in the number of men. Every day we are faced with more complex problems in the world. Every day there is a greater need for those who are doing the work of the world to be the very best people for the job. Yet we have the fact that people are being chosen not by their ability to do the work, not even by their sex, but merely by the wages for which they can be obtained. Therefore, in continuing to pay women at lower rates than men all that we are doing is to sacrifice the gains of recent years in the standard of living by lowering the standard of wages, and the women of this country are the very last people who would wish to be a party to that. 'I loathe and hate the idea of women getting advantages on grounds of charm and femininity.'

The couple's bad luck with driving continued when during the weekend of the 9 June they were involved in a crash on the A30 at the Parkhouse Crossroads, Cholderton near Salisbury. They were driving back to The Empire Hotel where they were going to stay for Whitsun while continuing their search for a house near Frome when their car was in collision with an army lorry and overturned. Mrs Tate was driving at the time and was rendered unconscious, she suffered a broken nose, which required an operation, a lacerated tongue, a broken rib, a fractured bone in her hand, cuts to the face and an injury to the knee. Henry Tate received cuts about the head and a crushed ankle meaning that he will be unable to walk without crutches for some weeks, and this after recovering from a serious appendix operation a few months ago. Her injuries were such that she had to cancel a meeting in Bristol due to continuing pain in her ribs and at the end of the month she was still in a nursing hospital in London but by 4 July she had recovered enough to hold two meetings in Keynsham, one at the women's' branch of the Keynsham Conservative Association and another at the Constitutional Club in the same area.

Nunney Court near Frome

By mid-July her search for a country residence was over when she found Nunney Court Manor a spacious six bedroomed house close to Frome which she agreed to rent for a year from 16 August. In the meantime, she stayed for a while at Longleat House with Lord Bath followed by Lord and Lady Hylton at Ammerdown Park, Radstock. During the same period, as well as her duties at Willesden, she found time to give a talk on 'Peace or War' at Corston Lodge, near Bath during which she explained her view that the League of Nations was limited in what it could achieve then moved onto her favourite subject of aviation which she described as 'the most terrible weapon of war that mankind had ever known and the time was long overdue,

when, for purposes of preparedness against attack our air force should be increased, we have fallen far behind the other great powers in this respect.'

Henry was able to attend but was still on crutches. Back in the Commons still of course representing Willesden she gave a brief speech on birth control,

> One of the causes of the ill-health of mothers in the urban and industrial areas is the tremendous amount of abortion. Members may or may not approve of birth control clinics, but let them face what is going on. A well-run and well-organised birth control clinic may be of infinite value to married women. You may not believe in them, but do not imagine that the other thing does not exist. The tremendous amount of advertising of materials to produce abortion that exists all over the country must cause anyone who has the welfare of the health of our mothers at heart very serious consideration. It is time that this fact was realised and that some steps were taken to deal with it.

On 23 July Mavis presented the House of Commons with a petition signed by 100 women's clubs urging the government to pass a law so that women, married or unmarried may have the same rights as men to independent nationality, only 118 signatures were allowed to stand due to alleged irregularities in the heading of the sheets. 'Women of the Empire resent the present law which holds that a British woman marrying a foreigner renounces her rights as a British citizen and takes on the nationality of her husband,' she claimed, 'If the husband's country will not have the wife as a subject then the woman is without a country.' The petition was delivered in the following terms,

> I beg to present a petition signed by 136 women representing 100 women's societies in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Bermuda, and Ceylon. The petition is based, first, on the fact that at Geneva in 1931 the British Government declared through its delegate, Dame Edith Lyttleton, that the British Government considered it right that all disabilities of married women in matters of nationality should be removed, and that in so far as nationality is concerned a married woman should be in the same position as a man, married or unmarried, or any single woman. Secondly, that the above declared policy is a just and right reform, and, thirdly, that four of the Dominions, by statement or action, have shown that they are not opposed to such reform. But the absence of any statement by the British Government that it is willing to give legal effect to the above declaration of policy is a difficulty in the way of the general adoption of this reform throughout the Dominions. Therefore, your petitioners pray the House of Commons to ask the British Government immediately to declare that it is willing to have legal effect given immediately to the above quoted declaration of policy, and to take all possible steps to secure the early passage of such legislation so that a woman, married or unmarried, shall have the same right as a man to enjoy independent nationality in her own person, and the same right to retain or change her nationality.

Her determination and hard work continued when on the 27th she attended a meeting of nearly 500 people at Woodborough House in Peasdown with Henry. This was her first serious address in the area during which she greatly impressed the audience with her determination and stamina.

Mavis and Henry Tate Peasdown 27 July 1935 *Bath Chronicle*

During the same month the Chancellor of the Exchequer allowed MPs to use their free rail passes on airliners with free landing and facilities at Hendon the nearest airport to Westminster, there were about a dozen MPs and about as many peers who owned aeroplanes and although Mavis did not have her own plane, she was a frequent flyer and enthusiast. On 31August she received an enthusiastic welcome at North Hill House, Frome when she addressed a crowded open-air meeting, her first public speech in Frome since her adoption as candidate, Major Duckworth of Orchardleigh presided. Throughout the following months she continued to build her contacts and profile whilst meeting electors in and around her new constituency including a ten-day tour of the northern part of the Frome district visiting two parishes per night with a travelling cinema which gave both music and pictures and was a great favourite with the youth of the villages who assembled in force and whose behaviour was described as exemplary.

On Saturday 26 October the Frome Conservatives held a meeting in the Red Triangle Hut in Frome and officially adopted Mrs Tate for the seat previously held by Viscount Weymouth who stood down some months ago due to business ties. His majority in the 1931 election was 7,110 and this was to be the first time that a woman had contested the seat. The Liberals and Labour Party also adopted their candidates, and her cousin Lord Hailsham spoke at a meeting in Frome on her behalf as did Lord Weymouth. On 2 November she took up residence at Nunney Court, but before she had a chance to arrange the furniture, she addressed four meetings in the Bath area during one evening.

Society magazine *Bystander* filled in a little useful background describing her as having a ‘purposeful nose, dresses in vivid colours which startle the House, extremely feminine in every way, temperamental, delicate, enthusiastic, and added that her brother Captain Kenneth Hogg

is an ex-Irish Guardsman who plays championship bridge.' Her canvassing continued throughout November in the build-up to the coming election during which time she addressed several meetings including Lullington, Rode, Beckington, Mells and Frome Temperance Hall, with Viscount Hailsham the Lord Chancellor addressing a meeting of over 1,500 at the Grand Cinema in Frome to endorse her campaign, the largest political assembly ever held in Frome.
All did not go quite so well at Peasedown school hall a couple of days before the election when Mavis was about half an hour late and the crowd became very restless. They were particularly annoyed that Mr Mackay the Labour candidate was unable to attend. Mrs Tate was continually drowned out by the singing of the Red Flag. The problem had arisen because it had been put about that she was not in favour of a pay rise for miners of two shillings per day. A youth burst through the crowd and waved a harness known to miners as a 'guss' in her face and shouted that it was slavery to have to wear it for 7 ½ hours per day. Mrs Tate took the harness good-humouredly and said she would keep it as a souvenir - which was possibly not quite the aim of the protest. Remarking amongst total uproar that this was the only meeting at which she had been unable to give her speech and that she had another meeting to address she left the hall amid further singing of the Red Flag.

On election day Thursday 14 November 1935, the ballot papers were brought in overnight from the scattered Frome Division to the Memorial Hall. Mavis and Henry arrived early with her carrying a bouquet of red white and blue flowers amid the boos of the socialist supporters but Mr Mackay was still unable to attend through gastric influenza. Gradually her supporters grew in size and by 1 o'clock the returning officer was ready to announce the result but was drowned out by the socialists making his words inaudible and the result was only made known by reading the results on the board. Mavis was elected MP for Frome with a majority of 994 at which she declared herself to be 'the proudest woman in Britain'. She made her way to the Conservative party offices at the top of Bath Street and gave a speech through a loudspeaker followed by a triumphal tour of the division in 20 cars arriving back in the Marketplace at 7.30 to address the crowd from the George Hotel.
Overall, the election resulted in a large, but reduced, majority for the National Government now led by Stanley Baldwin of the Conservative Party, forming his third government, as before the greatest number of seats, were Conservative, while the Liberal and Labour vote held steady, despite over a third of the Labour MPs, including party leader Ramsay MacDonald losing their seats. A huge crowd gathered outside the Frome Memorial Hall to hear the declaration shortly after one o'clock. Some unruly elements among the socialist supporters booed and barracked Mrs Tate when she tried to speak but she continued undaunted.

Stanley Baldwin PM three times

It is believed that Mavis was the first woman member to arrive at the House, shortly before 7.00am closely followed by her good friend Lady Astor. Meanwhile her previous constituents had not forgotten their popular MP and at their annual dinner at end of November she was presented with a silver salver by the Willesden Chamber of Commerce to show their appreciation.

With Christmas approaching Mavis carried out a victory parade of her new constituency and appeared with her husband at the Midsomer Norton Conservative Association celebration social held at the Drill Hall and received a magnificent reception ending with three cheers – and an additional one for Mr Tate. A 'very enjoyable' social was held in the Oriel Hall Swainswick, and the annual dinner of the Keynsham Christmas Fat Stock Association at the Wingrove Hotel. The expenses of the respective Frome candidates where detailed in the *Western Gazette* with Mavis Tate's coming in at £992/5/4 1/2d. Members of the immensely successful Willesden T8 Club were assured that the club would continue and keep the same name.

At the suggestion of the *Somerset Guardian* Mavis sent out a Christmas message on Christmas Eve.

> Dear Sir, I am so glad to avail myself of your support and suggestion that I should send a Christmas message to your readers. I am not going to make it a long one because I feel that they have read and heard so much from me during the past few weeks. I do however, from the bottom of my heart, send to you and your readers every possible good wish for Christmas and the coming year. The electors of the Frome Division have been good enough to put their confidence in me –and my New Year's resolution is it that that confidence should be justified. Again, with all my thanks to you and your readers for your courtesy in the past, and every good wish to you and to them for the future,
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> Yours sincerely, Mavis Tate.

Mrs Mavis Tate MP 1935 (Bassano Studio)

9. 1936 Pigeons and Parliament

At the start of the New Year there was little to indicate that the coming months would be one of the most dramatic years in the history of the modern monarchy with a royal death, an abdication and a reluctant succession with Mavis at the very heart of these affairs. The first event took place on Monday 20 January 1936, when King George V died at the age of 70. He

had ruled the country for a quarter of the century and had brought stability to a nation scarred by the Great War and now experiencing the depression. Like Mavis he had suffered various bouts of ill health throughout his life, including chronic bronchitis exacerbated by heavy smoking. By the end of 1935 he required oxygen tanks next to his bed and his personal physician, Lord Dawson of Penn, told the prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, that the king was 'packing up his luggage and getting ready to depart'. The king's final breath came at five minutes to midnight, with the royal family at his bedside and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, reciting prayers. Although his demise was imminent, it is now known from Dawson's own personal account in his diary that the physician hastened the process by injecting an overdose of morphine and cocaine into the king's jugular vein; not so much to save his majesty from any suffering, but with the intention of having the announcement within the morning broadsheet newspapers, rather than 'the less appropriate evening journals.'

When news of the death broke on the Tuesday morning, Mavis, along with the rest of the country, went into mourning. She cancelled all her forthcoming engagements – including an election victory dinner in Frome on the Saturday – so as to remain in London and attend to the parliamentary duties arising from a royal death. The first of these, to take place later that day, was the swearing of allegiance to the new monarch. In accordance with the Succession to the Crown Act, 1707, both Houses of Parliament were required to reconvene immediately on the death of the sovereign, regardless of any previously planned adjournments, a constitutional safeguard to ensure compliance with the law regarding succession to the throne. Parliament had adjourned for the Christmas recess on 20 December 1935 and was not due to meet again until 4 February 1936. Mavis had, of course, taken the Oath of Allegiance to King George V only a few weeks earlier. Now, or rather later that day, she was to offer it to his successor – Edward VIII.

The House was scheduled to meet at six o'clock on the Tuesday evening and throughout the afternoon members attired in mourning dress began to arrive in dribs and drabs gathering in small groups to digest the solemn news. By half-past five arrivals had swelled to a steady stream, and before long there were few unoccupied seats in the House. Mavis and the other Members rose as Speaker Captain Fitzroy, entered and walked to his chair. He was the first to take the Oath: 'I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful, and bear true allegiance, to His Majesty King Edward, his heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God.' Lady Astor was the first woman to do so. The House of Commons rose at 7.50pm by which time 350 others had sworn their loyalty.

On the following day, Wednesday 22 January, a message from the new king – signed by his own hand – was received in Parliament. It was brought into the House of Commons by the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin and read to the House by the Speaker, Baldwin moved for an address in reply that would express sympathy with His Majesty in his irreparable loss and offer the loyal congratulations of the House on his accession. Resolutions of condolence with the Queen Mother would also be passed by both Houses. The Commons address and messages of condolence were presented to the king by a delegation from the House, headed by the Prime Minister. Although Mavis was not one of the seven Members chosen for the delegation (the sole female representative was Lady Astor) she obviously played her part throughout the proceedings.

Meanwhile, in the House of Lords, The Lord Chancellor (Mavis' relation, the Viscount Hailsham, Douglas McGarel Hogg) began with the following announcement: 'My Lords, I beg to acquaint your Lordships that I have received the following letter from the Earl Marshal, dated the Earl Marshal's Office, Norfolk House, January 21, 1936: 'My Lord, it is the King's commands that the remains of His late Majesty shall be removed from Sandringham to Westminster Hall on Thursday next, January 23, there to lie in state until His late Majesty's funeral on January 28. The King thinks that members of your Lordships' House would wish to be present in Westminster Hall on January 23, together with members of the House of Commons, and I notify you accordingly. The body of His late Majesty will reach Westminster Hall at 4 o'clock.' The scrapbook of newspaper cuttings maintained by Mavis's secretary Winifred Mitchell contains her copy of a 'Ceremonial' giving details of the order of procedure now in Frome Museum.

It was proposed by the Leader of the House of Lords, Viscount Halifax, that the two Houses meet the following afternoon at 3.30, and proceed to Westminster Hall, in order to receive the remains of the late king. It would be convenient, he continued, 'if your Lordships would follow the procedure adopted on a similar occasion on the death of King Edward [VII, in 1910], and, as there can be no marshalling of the House, follow the Lord Chancellor as far as possible in the order of precedence of rank, moving to Westminster Hall four abreast.' Once the brief funeral ceremonies were concluded, he added, 'the House will resume its sitting here.'

As agreed, Mavis assembled with her parliamentary colleagues at 3.30 to follow the Lord Chancellor to Westminster Hall and await the royal coffin from Sandringham. Once it had arrived, it was made ready for lying in state and after the Royal Family had paid their respects, the two Houses, led by the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker filed in pairs past the catafalque. After this, would come the ordinary members of the public – more than three quarters of a million over the next four days – queuing fifteen deep as they waited in the streets of Westminster for a final glimpse of their beloved monarch. Finally, other royal figures and dignitaries from around the world would come to pay their respects. The lying in state culminated on the final night with the late king's four remaining sons – [King] Edward [VIII]; Albert [Duke of York]; Henry [Duke of Gloucester]; and George [Duke of Kent] – 'standing guard' over their father's body. This would become known as the 'Vigil of the Princes'. The day of the state funeral Tuesday 28 January 1936 – was fine but cold. Onlookers now twenty deep lined either side of the route that the coffin was to take in its processional journey atop a naval gun carriage from Westminster Hall to Paddington, where it would be taken by train to Windsor Castle for the funeral service and burial and the House reassembled for business.

During that month Mavis joined the Ladies' Carlton Club, one of the oldest establishments of its kind in London. Founded in 1907 by Major Sir Edward Coates (MP for Lewisham) as the Ladies' Imperial Club, its membership was restricted to women who were avowed Conservatives. Originally located in Dover Street, the club moved after Coates died in 1921 to a house in Chesterfield Gardens, just off Curzon Street, formerly a residence of Lord Islington. It was also at this time its name was changed. A fire in 1929 resulted in another move, this time to Grosvenor Place, Hyde Park Corner, and it was at this location that it welcomed Mavis as its newest member. The premises had previously been two large houses (Nos 4 & 5), which the late Lord Iveagh had make into one and used as his town house. Along with its numerous rooms, it boasted an elaborately decorated cocktail bar, swimming pool

(formerly stables) and a squash court. According to the *Daily Mirror*, writing not long after it had completed its latest move, it was now one the finest women's clubs in London and almost on a par with the luxurious clubs for women in America. It held lectures for its members and hosted private parties for its debutantes, invited Minsters and distinguished Conservatives as guests of honour at its political dinners and, at the time Mavis joined, enjoyed a membership of 2,500, which ensured that it continued to be a stronghold for Conservative women. It closed its doors in 1958.

On 4 February 1936 Parliament reconvened, and Mavis was again one of the 'first nighters', arriving at the gates by eight o'clock to 'stake her claim' on her preferred seat. As sprightly and full of stamina as she may have seemed there was the danger of Mavis 'burning the candle at both ends', especially as there were several late sittings as the parliamentary season got underway, culminating in an infamous all-night session at the end of the month. Late sittings were not unusual – there had already been several since the new session got underway, but protracted discussions lasting throughout the night had been fewer in recent times. The longest single sitting of the House had lasted from four o'clock on 31 January 1881 to nine thirty in the morning on 2 February, a duration of 41.5 hours. A flip side of this was the shortest sitting, which took place in March 1930, when the House completed its business within half an hour, a surprising event which caught out many late arrivals. Mavis had sat through a previous session during 1933 that had lasted over 22¾ hours – from 2.45 on a Thursday afternoon until 1.30pm the following day but now found herself having to endure another which would go on for almost as long.

The sitting for Thursday 27 February 1936 began at a quarter to three and finished at twenty-four minutes past midday on Friday 28 February – a total of twenty-one hours and thirty-nine minutes. The main reason for this was, according to the Opposition, was a tactical ploy to ensure that Friday's sitting was cancelled. The effect of which was to deprive the Labour Party of the opportunity it had won in the private members' ballot of promoting the Workmens' Compensation Bill. Several times an adjournment was asked for during the mammoth sitting, but each time the request was unsuccessful. Ironically, Captain Margesson, Chief Government Whip who was the man responsible for the refusals had, three years earlier, complained about the same tactics being used by Labour. As reported at that time, he thought that 'it was a very bad thing in these days, when many people were apt to say that Parliamentary institutions were worn out and useless, to bring those institutions into dispute, as was done by an all-night sitting. He could not exonerate the socialist party from the tactics they had pursued.' Mavis was one of four women members who were 'up all night', the other three were Conservatives Miss Horsbrugh and Miss Ward and Labour's Miss Wilkinson. Mavis is credited with shaking awake members who had fallen asleep.

It wasn't just the Members of Parliament that endured such long hours. Miss Horsbrugh interviewed just before midday, said – 'I have been here since five minutes to eleven yesterday morning, when I had to come down for a committee, and I have not been out since. I only took a walk as far as the House of Lords. I find it much better to sit in the House the whole time. I feel tired but not so tired as I was on the previous late sitting, when the House sat till 1.30'. It wasn't just the Members who put in the long hours. Some of the busiest people in the House on these all-night sittings were the caterers. During the sitting of December 1933, 250 suppers

and over 200 breakfasts had been served. With the present one, the head of the catering staff said about 200 suppers and as many breakfasts had been called for.

Despite all the upheavals, and her punishing round of engagements often supporting different constituencies and numerous charitable events, Mavis still found time to engage her passion for flying, albeit in a somewhat light-hearted manner. At the annual meeting of the Radstock Fellowship Homing Society in early January 1936 it had been suggested that a race take place between Mrs Tate and a number of pigeons! She had agreed to become a vice president of the society and had provided a special prize for the forthcoming season. Social engagements continued with Mavis handing out various prizes and awards at social events including one in Frome accompanied by her husband who appeared on a list of Warwickshire magistrates 'who have qualified but have ceased to act or have desired that no official notices be sent to them.'. She outlined plans to move an amendment to ensure that gardeners should be included under a scheme to bring agricultural labourers under the Unemployment Insurance scheme.

By early March plans for the much-discussed pigeon race were well underway and Mavis announced details of the forthcoming event during a meeting at the Fox Inn, Midford. Remarking that one of the interests of the Frome Division was pigeon racing, she told the company that prior to her election she went to Radstock and saw pigeons being marked. She was asked whether, in the event of being elected, she would race against the pigeons and she agreed. The idea was that the birds should start from Tamworth in Staffordshire and once they had been released, she would start at the same moment by car to Radcliffe Aerodrome, fly to Frome and then drive to Radstock. Any profits arising from the contest would go to Paulton Hospital. 'I think myself that the pigeons will have a good chance'. she commented. 'If you have a bet I should not be certain in betting on me!' Prizes of £2/2/-, £1/1/- and 10/- have been promised for the first three birds home. Entries will be accepted from any fancier in the Frome Division.

During March Mavis spoke in favour of a reform of the lunacy laws at a mass Conservative meeting at Bridgwater Town Hall, went to a social and dance, at the parish hall in Farnborough with Mr Tate, and attended an event at Upper Weston during which she was asked to judge locally made paper hats and adjudicate at a beauty competition for men to which she said, 'I have been asked to judge the best looking man which is enough to make enemies for life, but if it is any consolation to you my taste in men rather tends towards ugly men – look at my husband! So whoever I choose for the winner need not feel unduly flattered and whoever I reject need not feel unduly depressed.' A Mr George Smith was adjudged the winner, his reaction is not recorded - and nor was that of Mr Tate.

On 17 March Mavis took part in a long debate on the future of aviation as the only female MP who was a practical flying enthusiast with a remarkable technical knowledge of the subject. The motion was to limit the number of people employed in the, 'air service'. She spoke at length with her usual fire and determination, advocating the building up of British interests in the aero industry over that of foreign investors. The debate was headed,

'That a number of Air Forces, not exceeding 50,000, all ranks, be maintained for the service of the United Kingdom at home and abroad, exclusive of those serving in India (other than Aden), during the year ending on the 31st day of March, 1937.'

It has been the fashion today, as in past years, to congratulate the Under-Secretary on the admirable manner in which he has introduced these estimates. He introduced them this year with even greater skill than before, if that be possible, but I do not think that he is to be congratulated on that, for practice makes perfect, and in five years a practice of lulling to sleep the suspicions of this Committee with regard to the adequacy of our air service ought to be perfect. He spoke with great feeling on the future of aviation, and reassured us that, owing to the generosity of Lord Rothermere, we have an extremely effective military machine. But it is not the actual number of machines that we have that will be vital in time of war; it is the capacity for producing those machines in large numbers. Not one word has been said this afternoon about whether we have the jigs laid down which can produce those machines in large quantities in time of war.

The Under-Secretary spoke with tremendous feeling of commercial aviation and of his own faith that aviation is the greatest power the world has been given for promoting peace. I whole heartedly concur in that belief, but I cannot feel his extraordinary satisfaction with the commercial aviation of this country. He told us that Bishop Wilkins said 300 years ago that the day would come when people would call for their wings as regularly as they called for their boots. What matters is which countries' wings reply to the call. To-day there is a danger that the call will be answered by Pan-American Airways.

Last year the Under-Secretary told us that it was the intention of this country that there should be four or five services a week to India, three to East Africa and Singapore, two to South Africa and Australia, seven or eight services a. week to Egypt, and that he hoped later on we should do even better than that. We know it was not intended that these services should come into operation until 1937, but the Under-Secretary said then that the years had a habit of passing quickly, and 1937 is not very far off. In view of such a rapidly approaching date we have a right to expect that the ground organisation should be laid down to make these services effective.

When we look at these votes, what do we find allowed for ground organization? The sum of £204,000 to supply adequate ground organisation, meteorological service, radio beams and night-flying installation. Anyone with a knowledge of the cost of such services will agree that the sum voted is hopeless, and that we have a right to say that our commercial aviation is being starved. For meteorological service the increase in the vote is some £6,000, and £2,000 of that is to be voted to the Navy. The safety and efficiency of our Empire transport depend upon this. We have in this country installed at only one aerodrome the latest system for directing and landing in the fog. Only the other day we learned of the lamentable condition in a fog of 15 foreign aircraft, which were flying over Croydon for some time and were obliged to return to their own landing grounds. One feels little consolation from recent lamentable evidence which was given following a crash, and which showed that had they been machines of Imperial Airways there is very grave doubt whether the quantity of oil they carried would have enabled them to return to their bases.

We are told that 29 flying boats and 12 land machines are under construction. Doubtless, we think that when those machines have taken the air, the whole world will be edified at the perfection of British design and the magnificence of the weapon given us by Imperial Airways to conquer the airways of the world. What do we find in actual fact? I believe that these machines will have a maximum range of about 1,500 miles. They will not be completed until 1937. In America there is the 'S. 43,' which is already two years old and has a maximum range of no less than 3,000 miles. It is able to carry a payload of from 3½to 5 tons. Another machine, which is already one year old, has a range of about 3,000 miles, and aeroplanes which are on the stocks in America will probably have a range of about 5,000 miles. We boast of the machines that are being constructed by Messrs. Short, and whose range is 1,500 miles. Hon.

Members are going to be taken to see them to-morrow, and Imperial Airways are going to give us all a champagne lunch before we see them, Heaven knows we shall need the champagne. Hon. Members opposite have said that they are not against a monopoly service, and we have been told that the monopoly has been granted to Imperial Airways on the score of economy. If the Under-Secretary argues that it is economical not to have competition on a line where aeroplanes and seaplanes are already running, we might have to accept that, but will he explain what economy there is in having a monopoly service which is going to prevent any other line operating a route, although the Imperial Airways have not a machine with which they could possibly fly that route? Statements have appeared in the press, to the effect that we are shortly to have a service flying the Atlantic. There is no possibility of flying the Atlantic with any machine which has a lower range than 2,700 miles.

If Imperial Airways say that they are going to fly the Atlantic before 1940 then I call their bluff and I say that they have no machines with which they can do it. Yet to-day not only is that route reserved and a monopoly of it given to Imperial Airways, but, if a private line were prepared to build aeroplanes to fly the route, owing to the interference of the Air Ministry, they would not be allowed to do so, neither would they be given Post Office contracts. I ask the Under-Secretary, again, wherein is the economy? In answer to a question the other day the Postmaster-General told me that we were paying no less than £60,000 to French and German lines for flying the South Atlantic. I think this country has the right to ask why we should be paying that sum to foreign airlines. Why not to British air lines?

I believe that if the development of commercial aviation had been left to private enterprise, we should not be in this lamentable position. I believe we can construct the machines. That has been proved with regard to military machines. When Lord Rothermere asked that a good machine should be built, a magnificent machine was forthcoming because we had not the lamentable interference of the Air Ministry in the technical design. I believe, with the hon. and gallant Member for Wallasey (Lieut.-Colonel Moore-Brabazon), that civil aviation ought to be taken out of the hands of the Air Ministry which has proved that it cannot deal with it. It ought to be put under the Board of Trade. I shall have more to say about the deplorable services of Imperial Airways on the Air navigation Bill, but I do not want to detain the Committee longer at this late hour. While congratulating the Under-Secretary on his rather deplorable skill in hiding the facts I cannot congratulate him or those whom the hon. and gallant Member for Wallasey described so felicitously as his fellow backscratchers, on the service they give us in Imperial Airways.

Towards the end of March Mavis was taken ill at her home in Cadogan Square with gastric influenza and was unable to attend a smoking concert held at the Brislington and St Ann's Unionist Club Bristol to which she had donated three silver cups. She also missed a whist drive at the Pavilion in Bath in the same week and as though this wasn't enough for her to contend with no sooner had she recovered from this than she was confined to bed with a poisoned leg. Somehow, she managed to limp along to a meeting of the Somerset Farmers Union in the Weymouth Hall, Frome two days later and gave her view that Government policy in regard to agriculture had been most unsatisfactory in many directions. There was also to be a debate about the banning of adverts for patent medicines which claimed to cure various diseases from cancer to TB which were felt to be amongst the worst forms of exploitation practised by fraudulent persons playing on the fears of the unwell. Mrs Tate opposed the ban on the grounds that, 'the door should be kept open for discoveries made by those who were called unqualified practitioners such as Louis Pasteur.' In the end no proper debate took place as only 24 members

were present and a quorum of 40 was needed. Back in the Commons on 30 April, she took part in the debate on the Midwives Bill, which argued for the provision of a salaried service under the control of local authorities,

> The last three years have been almost impossible for the practising independent midwife, and now that we are improving the conditions of those who come into the service in the future, the least we can do in recognition of the extraordinary selfless work which has been done in the past is to see that the women who are now to be retired are adequately compensated. They get some part of their remuneration in the sheer love of their work but at least let us see that they have some appreciation for what they have done. We want to see conditions improved in the service, and I should like to ask the Minister whether local authorities have power to provide houses for midwives. The conditions under which they live are as important as the salaries they earn.
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> I welcome the Bill. I believe it is going to be a very important step, although only one step on the way in dealing with the problem of maternal mortality. It is most regrettable, however, that the Central Midwives Board does not come under the Ministry of Health. It is under the Treasury. If the Ministry of Health is to be a really effective and constructive weapon in dealing with the health of the country, it should have charge of everything concerning the health of the people. The Bill is only going to be of value in dealing with the problem of maternal mortality if it means that in future we are to have a better trained midwifery service. The right hon. and gallant Member for Ripon (Major Hills) asked that we might have two years' training for midwives. Personally, I say that if we cannot have two years' midwifery training, at least let us see that all midwives are also trained nurses. It seems rather curious that if you get in a nurse to nurse your child in some childish ailment, she has to have three years' training, but you let a woman, at what is admitted to be a dangerous and difficult time in her life, be nursed with her infant child, by a woman who has perhaps had no more than one year's training.
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> I know that to-day the medical profession deplores the propaganda that has taken place with regard to maternal mortality. They feel, and quite rightly, that the fear that is put into women may perhaps even add to the dangers of childbirth, but let us recognise that that fear is there because of the failure of the medical profession in the past, what we have to do away with the causes that give rise to the fear. That can only be done by better training. It is quite useless to have better training for your midwives if you are not to have far better training for your doctors also, for, remember, the midwife is going to have to call in the doctor when she considers the case particularly difficult or in some way abnormal, and in very many cases to-day the doctor has not got anything like the degree of skill and knowledge of the circumstances with which he
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> The question was raised as to whether the training facilities of the country would be sufficient for the extra training that would have to be provided by the refresher courses and the larger number of midwives that it is anticipated will come into the service. I think it is well known that facilities for the training for the numbers of midwives who are in practice are probably there, but they are certainly not there for the number of people who take the Central Midwives Board's certificate. When the Minister spoke of the problem of maternal mortality being one which needed voluntary effort on the part of the whole country, I felt that he was really striking the right note. It is not only voluntary effort that is needed, but also common sense, and until you have the Hospital Appointments Board refusing to make it necessary for women who take the higher appointments in hospitals to have had a Central Midwives Board's certificate, you will never ensure that there is sufficient material for the midwives and the doctors to be trained on.

I very much deplore the tremendous play which hon. Members opposite have tried to make to-day with regard to the amount of money that is to be spent on the midwifery service as compared with the amount of money that is to be spent on armaments. They glibly talk of money being spent on weapons of destruction, but has it never yet dawned on their politically warped minds that the money which we are spending on armaments is spent to save life just as much as the money which we are spending on maternity services? If they were in power, with their incredible policy of rushing to war with no arms, there would not be very much life left in this country to save, and there would be no need for a Midwives Bill to-day, because women and children would be slaughtered in their thousands. It is a lamentable thing, when hon. Members opposite take a genuine interest is this terrible problem of maternal mortality, and when they can find so little fault with the Government's Bill, that the only thing they can do is to try to make propaganda about the money spent on armaments as compared with the money spent on maternity services. It is nonsense.

If the money spent on maternity services could have saved maternal mortality, I believe it would have been done long ago. To-day we are spending more on maternity services than we have ever spent before, and the figures of maternal mortality are no lower than they were when we spent no money at all. I am not saying that money does not need to be spent on it, but I do say that it needs spending in the right way and that the mere spending of money will do nothing whatever. You can judge not at all of the effect on maternal mortality by the amount of money you spend. The Government are spending some £20,000 a year at least on giving training to some of these women, who, I maintain, ought not to be allowed to take the midwifery examination because they never intend to practice midwifery, and that money spent on maternity services is absolutely thrown away. You will not get a real decrease in maternal mortality until you get a better trained medical service and a better trained midwifery service.

No country can afford to lose mothers or young children, and I long for the day when the public conscience will be sufficiently aroused to make it impossible that any expectant mother in this country shall be short of food. When the hon. Member led off for the Opposition in this Debate it is a pity he did not remember to say that if that is the standard by which you are to judge, this country is ahead of the whole world. The right hon. Gentleman was very scornful of what was done by voluntary effort. When he deplored the money, which was to be given to encourage it and spoke in glowing terms of the magnificent maternity record in West Ham, it was curious that he forgot to mention that the amazingly good maternity record there is very largely due to the work done by the Plaistow Maternity Hospital. It is a pity that he should try to give credit to the socialist administration in West Ham when the credit is really due in so large a measure to the voluntary hospital which in the next breath he tried to decry. It is a curious way of trying to fight one's cause.

In the county of Somerset, we have a very admirable service of Queen's Nurses, and our maternal mortality rate is well below that of the country as a whole. I am very thankful that those voluntary services which have done so much are to be made full use of and encouraged, and I only hope that the efforts which have been made by the philanthropic public to raise money in support of those nursing associations will not, as a result of this Bill, in any way diminish, and that people will not begin to think that there is a less great need for help. I think that we are very often satisfied with far too low a standard of health for the nation as a whole.

The only thing that matters is how many people are dying who ought not to die, and how many people are suffering from bad health. The actual maternal mortality rate can be got down very easily, because it has been done in large parts of the country, to less than one death per thousand, and we should not rest satisfied until we get down to that rate. I am very glad that this Bill has been brought in, and I believe that it has been brought in by a Minister who has

the gifts of imagination and of initiative. I believe that he will sympathetically reviews Amendments which are brought forward to improve one or other section of the Bill, and that under his guidance it will be, what we all hope it will be, a real corner-stone in building up a better service for maternity in this country.

I know that the hon. Lady (Miss Wilkinson) and her party do not believe in the voluntary organisations except as steppingstones and want to see this service taken over by the State. I believe that eventually this service will be run by the State. Of that I am convinced, but when that day comes we shall lose something of great value. I hope it will be long delayed. I anticipate it coming with great regret, because I believe that we shall then lose something of beauty and of value which it will be difficult to replace. I also believe that by utilising the services of the voluntary organisations we should be able to get this Measure working as the Minister wishes it to work, far more speedily than would otherwise be the case. Under the Bill we know that midwives, whether employed by local authorities or by voluntary organisations, will have standardised training and will have opportunities of refreshing their knowledge. I believe that the Measure is going to do what the Minister intends it to do, and what we all hope it will do, namely, raise both the status and the salary of the midwife.

Mavis was apparently outraged when Peter Howard of the *Daily Express* published not only her date of birth, 17 August 1893 but her weight at 9 stone 3lb, how he obtained the latter information was not revealed but it is said that she never spoke to him again. After more rounds of prize giving and speeches at various events during the spring months the much anticipated day arrived. On 16 May 1936 the race organised by the Radstock Fellowship Homing Society against pigeons to be released from Tamworth Railway station took place and at 1 pm. Mavis drove to Castle Bromwich aerodrome and took off in an aeroplane loaned by Mr Lindsey Everard MP for East Leicester. 'They arrived at the Gypsy Lane Flying Ground at approximately 2.30 and Mavis was driven to Radstock by her agent AA Joynt. Frank Beauchamp is giving a cup in connection with the race, to be awarded to Mrs Tate if she arrives at Radstock before any of the pigeons, if she fails to do so the cup will be presented to the owner of the first pigeon home. The entry fee is one shilling per bird the owner of the first bird to arrive if it is before Mrs Tate will also receive the £2.02 shillings.' On the day 166 racing pigeons belonging to 43 competitors took part having been sent overnight to Tamworth which is 98 ½ miles from Radstock as the crow flies. Mavis was present at the station to see the birds released and her plane, arrived at Frome at 2.32pm after which she was driven to Radstock arriving there at 2.56pm having covered a total of 140 miles taking a total of one hour 56 minutes and two seconds from leaving Tamworth.

Her party was received at the Waldegrave Arms Hotel where she said that she had not seen any of the birds during flight and prevailing winds on Saturday were unfavourable to them being southeast which would have considerably retarded their velocities. It was generally believed that Mrs Tate would be an easy winner, but the result was not known until the following Wednesday. Some other competitors had already returned to their clocks but upon full examination of these it seems fairly obvious that Mavis had won the race easily, the best time for any of the birds being three hours and 27 minutes some taking over four hours. Her plane was met by a crowd of about 50 people including her husband and sheets had been laid on the ground to make the landing place more discernible.

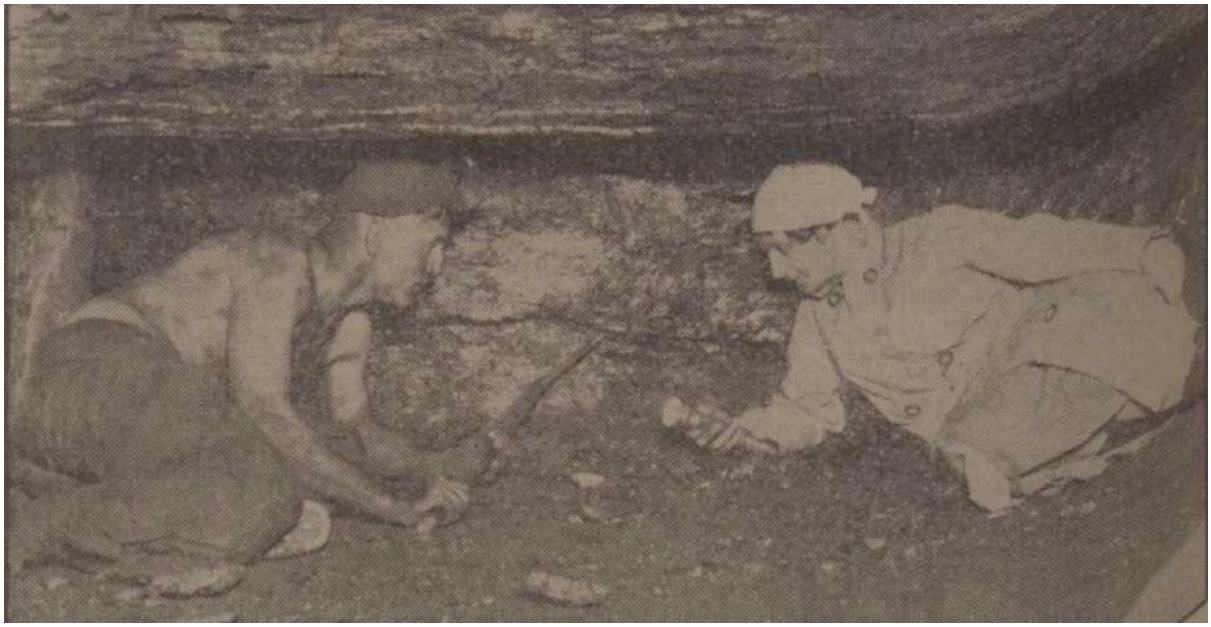
Mavis with Pigeons

The plane had to bank steeply to avoid a hedge when landing and bumped rather sharply on the uneven surface of the ground. Mavis alighted smiling to the cheers of the onlookers and posed for a photograph beside the machine which had taxied up to the side of the waiting car after which Mr Joynt drove the eight miles to Radstock. Mavis's luggage was transferred from the plane to the car and as she was driven off she remarked, 'Thank you so much for coming up here to meet me. I do hope Mr Joynt won't do me in on the way'. Commander Phillips stated that despite a strong wind flying conditions were good and after a ten-minute break he took the plane on its return journey to Castle Bromwich. In total some 5,500 birds had been released in Tamworth. Mavis had travelled at a rate of 1,146 yards per minute and won the cup which she handed over to the Radstock Homing Society to be completed for annually with a replica to be provided for the winner each season.

The following day at the Frome Conservative Club after handing out the various trophies and prizes she returned to politics and recalled that when she became their candidate, she reserved the right to vote in any way she thought right, and that she might not always agree

with the government. She had been saved from voting against them on the question of equal pay for men and women because she was ill at the time. In an aside she claimed not to be a 'real feminist' as she did not think men and women were equal and she did not want them to be, but it was going to be desperately to the detriment of men to have women paid at a lower rate of wages. She did not want to see women used to depress the standard of living. If there was equal pay for men and women, it would be infinitely better than using women as a form of cheap labour.

Towards the end of June, she made a good her promise to the journalist who interviewed her before her selection and descended the 'Old Mills' colliery pit in Paulton descending 1,000 feet to see the miners in action. She spoke to them at the coalface and saw the coal cutting apparatus in action, accompanied by her husband, she descended into the mine at 9:45 and returned at 12:30 declaring to the colliery manager that she did not wish to give a detailed account of her impressions after only one visit. Mavis asked one of the miners what they thought of the conditions to which he replied that, no one should have to come here for less than 10/- a shift and it is worth every penny of it'. To which she replied, 'I don't think it is the conditions so much as the continuous hard work and in comparison, with other workers I must admit your wages are low. When she came across a group of men having, a break she was told that they were eating the bread and cheese. 'That's alright, she exclaimed, because the farmers are very upset because men are turning off cheese and on to jam.' She explained that she had been down a mine before but that was a gold mine in South Africa and expressed herself greatly interested in the working conditions of the Somerset miners and wished to see how they operated. She took great pleasure in finding that the pit ponies were kept in such excellent condition. Mavis said that she wished to visit other important industries in her constituency and that she had already visited the Selwood Printing Works.



Down a coalmine (*Bath Chronicle*)

During a long debate on Unemployment Assistance on 22 June, she gave her views on equality between men and women when claiming benefits,

> In assessing the needs of the household, it is difficult to get away from the means test. I realise and approve of the principle that a man drawing relief should not draw as much as a man who is in work. I may be said to be contradicting myself when I say that women should draw on a scale equal with men because they do not earn equal wages with men, but the sooner they do so the better both for men and themselves. It is not to the advantage of men in employment that women should be used, as they are at present, to decrease wages, and the sooner the country realises that the better for the men and women.

In early July she turned her attention once more to local issues and asked the Minister of Health whether he was aware that there was a serious shortage of houses in the village of Rode, and that plans put forward for the erection of five houses in the village had been turned down by the Warminster and Westbury Rural District Council owing to the water supply being inadequate; she asked when conditions are likely to be rectified.

In the House on 16 July, she described many nursing homes as disease traps and an absolute scandal. There is no regulation which ensures that rooms are sterilised after each patient has occupied them and many London nursing homes must be the cause of spreading disease.' Moving onto mental health she agreed with the findings of the Brock Committee which had rejected the compulsory sterilization, for 'mental defectives' likely to return to the community, and she did

> ….not think that it is certain that sterilisation is satisfactory in countries where it has been put into practice. I emphatically say that sterilisation is not a cure. Even if we admit that it is right, which I do not think has yet been proved, it is not a cure. It may be a method of prevention of spreading mental disease, but it is not in any way a prevention of the cause of the disease. We shall never find out the cause of the disease unless there is far greater research into the glands of the human body. Anyone who has had anything to do with certifying the insane, as I have as a magistrate, must be struck by the enormous amount of insanity which occurs in both sexes at adolescence and again in later age. I think that that points to insanity being closely connected with the glandular system of the body. That is where greater research is needed. How can there be research when we have in our mental hospitals sometimes 700 or 800 patients with only two doctors? I know that we are very proud of the research which is being done in Maudsley Hospital. How much money is being spent on research there to-day? It is about £4,000 a year, of which £3,000 is provided by the Rockefeller Institute of America. That money is largely spent on investigating family history. That is very valuable and necessary, but it is not investigating the medical cause of the disease. It is making no effective research into the cause.
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> I went over the Maudsley Hospital the other day and with immense pride I was shown the room for occupational and recreational pastimes. I said, 'What a miserable little room.' The doctor replied, 'Mrs Tate, it is the largest in the whole country.' There are a great many mental hospitals which have been completed in the last five years which have not had a room designed for occupational or recreational work, although it has been proved in America to be one of the most curative treatments. In this country we still have the padded cell. Do you mean to tell me that the padded cell is a method of cure? It is wholly out of date; it is not allowed in Scotland; it is not allowed any

longer on the Continent. While there are 300 to 400 insane people under the care of one doctor, of course some of them have to be put in a padded cell, but that is not the right way to treat them. It is hiding them away and preventing their being a nuisance and in a manner, salving our conscience, but it is not doing anything to find out the causes of the disease or how to cure them. I think it is time we insisted that money was spent on research and that proper salaries were paid to those engaged in research work.

Mental health dealt with, the debate moved on to vaccination.

The Minister said to-day there had not been a single case of smallpox in this country in the last year. As hon. Members know, in this country vaccination is still legally compulsory, but that compulsion is an absolute farce. I am thankful to say that at the present time not more than 40% of the children born are vaccinated against smallpox. I say that I am thankful for this reason. I am a believer in vaccination, and I do not think there is any question whatever that smallpox was stamped out originally by vaccination, but I do not think that the country is aware that the vaccine lymph used in this country today has very little if any relation to the lymph which stamped out smallpox, and I believe that it is a cause of very grave danger to the community. Any bacteriologist—I have worked in a laboratory—will admit that if you change a lymph from one animal to a completely different animal you entirely change its character. Calf lymph is the lymph with which children have to be vaccinated according to the law, but they are being vaccinated with rabbit lymph.

It is only since 1902 that the Government began to make experiments with rabbit lymph, and I think it was in 1905 that that lymph began to be used for the public. It was in 1912 that the first case of encephalitis, following vaccination, was notified in this country, and it was treated at the London Hospital. It is known that there have been over 1,000 cases of deaths from encephalitis following vaccination, and I believe that the actual number is enormously in excess of that, and I know, because I had charge of a child who had encephalitis following vaccination. I called in four very expert medical men to treat that child in the early stages of the illness. The case was diagnosed first as typhoid, then as paratyphoid, then as influenza and then as gastric chill. It was not until the patient was brought to London, and when the symptoms of almost complete paralysis were present, that the case was diagnosed as what it was, one of poliomyelitis and following vaccination.

The rabbit is known to have encephalitis. I know that the Minister will be told by his Department that the encephalitis of the rabbit has no relation to the encephalitis of the human being. How do they know? Another thing. I do not think it is generally known that other diseases can be super-imposed. It was because a child of five died from syphilis after being vaccinated with human lymph from a grown man that human- to-human vaccination was forbidden in this country. It was because lymph which was taken to America caused the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 1908 that America passed a law forbidding the importation. of foreign lymph. We are to-day using rabbit lymph, though the Ministry have tried to assert that that is not the case. In December, 1922, in answer to a question asked in this House, the then Minister of Health said: 'The lymph at present used at the Government lymph establishment is a strain of lymph obtained many years ago which has been carried on by repeated transference from calf to calf.' That may be a very satisfactory answer but does not happen to be the truth. If hon. Members will turn to the Ministry of Health Vaccination Report published in

1928, they will find, on page 15, under the heading of *Procedure at Government Lymph Establishments*, the statement: The seed lymph used is derived from calf lymph received from Cologne in 1907. It is obtained by cutaneous passage through the rabbit; it is not lymph obtained by passage from calf to calf. I do not know whether the House is aware that glycerinated calf lymph, the only calf lymph which should be used, will not pass the Ministry's test to-day because the lymph submitted is diluted by one in a thousand and tried on a rabbit, and glycerinated calf lymph, if diluted by one in a thousand and tried on a rabbit, will bring forth no reaction and cannot pass the test. The only stuff that will pass the test is the very dangerous lymph from the rabbit, which works with rapidity. I hope that the Minister will now either see that we have glycerinated calf lymph or wipe away the nonsensical provision that people shall be compulsorily vaccinated, in view of the fact that smallpox is not prevalent and no one has proved whether the extraordinary lymph used to-day is really a safeguard against smallpox.

I know that smallpox was stamped out in the 1924 epidemic in Edinburgh by vaccination, but the lymph used there was not the Government lymph. The Ministry of Health was written to urgently for supplies and sent supplies sufficient for three days, with a letter saying that to send further supplies would unduly deplete their resources. The Edinburgh authorities then wrote to a doctor in London and got a million doses of glycerinated calf lymph, which proved entirely satisfactory. Since then, glycerinated calf lymph has not been used in this country, because it will not pass the Ministry's test. I believe that in the present Minister of Health we have a man who really will do something to see that use is made of the existing medical knowledge. I believe that under him we may have something really original done to get a move on to the medical profession. I congratulate him on his speech to-day and would like to renew my expressions of confidence in him. I think we could have no better proof of the work which the Ministry of Health has done than the curiously weak speech of the spokesman for the Opposition.

Meanwhile, there was trouble at the Peasedown Flower Show when it was pointed out that it was illegal under the Betting and Lotteries Act to estimate the number of people in attendance at a public event for betting purposes despite tickets being already on sale for that and the Radstock Carnival at four pence each. When asked for guidance Mavis said that it was up to the chief constable and the competition was cancelled. Acting on the advice of her doctor she booked a holiday abroad at the beginning of September, the first one since coming to Frome in May of the previous year. She had been in indifferent health for some time and was still suffering from the aftereffects of the motor accident shortly after her arrival.

On 22 October Mavis spoke at the Marksbury schoolroom, 'having attended 100 functions in her division since the election only a year ago,' talking about the situation in Spain she remarked, 'I think we all feel that nothing more ghastly than the Spanish Civil War has happened in our lifetime. It has been one of the most revolting campaigns of which I have ever read, and the one thing I hope is that this country will not express any feeling for one side or the other'. Mavis condemned the actions of Sir Oswald Mosley who led his fascists to stir up trouble in the East End of London and described from her own personal observations the poverty of the people in Germany and Italy and spoke of the danger that arose from the fact that the dictators had to distract the people's attention by some outside adventure. That same

month she was in Bath denying accusations that she was there to take the cure and claiming that it was in connection with her duties as MP meeting various committees and seeing as many as four bodies of representatives in one day.

During October Mavis was asked to take part in a debate with the local Labour Party leader Ronald W Mackay to discuss the policy of the government on the major questions of the day and totally out of character, she declined. Mackay was no ordinary Labour Party hack. He was born in Australia in 1902 and studied at Sydney University, where he obtained an LLB in 1926 and an MA with Hons in Education in 1927. In the late 1920s he lectured at Sydney University in philosophy, history and economics and taught in many colleges and universities in the United States and Britain broadcasting frequently on the national and Overseas Services of the BBC. He was admitted as a solicitor in Sydney in 1926, and when he came to England in 1934, he was admitted as a solicitor here. In 1935 he began his political career, standing first as a Labour candidate in Frome. He remained a prospective candidate there until 1942 when he resigned from the Labour Party only to re-join again in 1945 becoming MP for Hull North-West from 1945 to 1950. Mackay offered to pay for the hall and issue tickets equally between Conservative Party and the Labour Party as well as organising the event. He issued his challenge in a half page letter in the *Bath Chronicle* on 28 October 1936 suggesting that among the main topics be rearmament which his party was against, and involvement in the Spanish Civil War. It has been fairly well demonstrated that Mavis was no stranger to debate and hold her own against anyone so why did she shy away from this?

She gave her reasons such as they were in the *Bath Chronicle,* 'I do not think there would be the slightest use of such a meeting. He deals with a great many figures which I have not been able to study as I have not had a spare moment since I saw the article.' Her response is reasonable when it is considered that she was a full time working MP with an exhausting schedule and Mackay was an academic with time on his hands.

On her own initiative she invited Herr Ehrenfried Pfeiffer a German biologist and follower of Rudolf Steiner who held novel ideas on biological- dynamic methods of agriculture, to give a lecture, about 50 farmers attended, their response was not recorded. Later in the month she agreed to present a cup for the football competition each season at Burgess Hill between two professional clubs for the benefit of the local hospital; the competition to be known as the Mavis Tate Cup Competition. On 11 November Mavis opened the annual 'sale of work' in aid of funds for the Bailbrook Mission Church in Batheaston. She attended with her husband and said that she has not yet found the exact kind of country cottage in the Frome area which she requires and would like an untenanted cottage of the sort formally occupied by a gamekeeper, a far cry from the house at Nunney Court, possibly Henry was tightening the purse strings.

On the 20 November the House debated the second reading of the Marriage Bill - Mavis was the only woman to take part.

> There is no question that in the country at large there is a very considerable proportion of feeling—and it is not only religious feeling—which believes that marriage should in all circumstances be indissoluble. There is also a feeling which believes that the only true grounds for divorce should be complete incompatibility of temper. I venture to suggest that we are not

here to legislate for the one opinion or the other but for the greater good of the greater number. We are also here to see that such laws as are passed by this honourable House are laws which neither press so harshly on the community that they come to be disregarded, nor are such laws as in administration are inequitable between different sections of our people. I am not prepared to say that it might not be for the betterment of the race if marriage were indissoluble. I believe that we are not able to judge that, and that only history in later years may perhaps be able to decide. But that is not the question which we are here to decide.

Marriage has been dissoluble in this country since 1857, when is it was recognised that, where adultery had taken place, a marriage must no longer be considered binding; but so strange has the working of the law become that, it is in many instances, it is extremely difficult to get divorced, because a large number of people are getting divorced by what amounts to nothing more or less than mutual consent using the cloak of adultery under which to get it, with the result that many judges are uncertain as to when adultery has or has not taken place. In many genuine cases people who are almost sure that their marriage partners have committed adultery have no money with which to pay, for instance, for a woman to pretend that she has slept with the husband or with which to find evidence from hotel servants and so on, and they remain bound for ever. I think that no matter what our religious opinions may be, we can no longer support a system which is leading to these abuses.

The hon. Member who spoke against the Bill did so because he said that by extending the grounds for divorce, we should be sacrificing the interests of the rising generation to those of the present generation. I think he was very optimistic as to what you can hide from the knowledge of a child. He said many people remain together and keep their mutual hatred hidden for the sake of their affection for the children in the home. I do not think it is possible to hide mutual hatred between parents from any children. It is not only the children of unhappy marriages where the parents are living together whom we have to consider. What of the children being brought up to-day with the stigma of illegitimacy because the parents have been able to find no relief in divorce and have taken what is known as a lover or a mistress, children who are being brought up in what would be a happy and healthy home life if they were not living under the stigma of illegitimacy? It is our duty to-day, more perhaps than it has ever been in the past, to do everything we can to safeguard the rising generation and see that they grow up in healthy, happy, moral homes, but that is not done where you have wives trying to bring children up with the small sums that they get under maintenance orders unable to marry men who are willing to marry them. Nor is it for the welfare of the race that adults should be prevented from bringing children into the world because they are legally tied to partners who are in prison or in an asylum.

I should like to say a word on the clause which brings in insanity. I think we shall have to look into it very carefully in order to safeguard the position of those unhappy people where the marriage is dissolved because of the insanity of one or partner in order to ensure that someone is responsible for their financial support. No one would wish to see people divorced and left without any financial support whatever. That is a point which is not brought into the Bill, but which will undoubtedly need careful examination in Committee.

I very much welcome the Clause that does away with the intervention of the King's Proctor between the decree nisi and the decree absolute. He often only intervenes in cases in which he has received an overwhelming number of anonymous letters, and I cannot believe it the wish of hon. Members to see the law of the land administered on the basis of anonymous letters. Whatever grounds you have for divorce, I do not believe that you will be able to eliminate a certain amount of collusion but, if you are going to have collusion, it is surely more Christian, more moral, more desirable that you should have collusion where two people agree to live apart

for three years than that you should have collusion which necessitates the buying of women's bodies and the buying of evidence from hotel servants, who are in no way to blame for what they are called upon to do.

I think the Bill has found general support. There are Members who will not vote on it and one of their excuses will be that a measure of such importance should not be brought forward by a private Member but by the Government. I think that is an indefensible point of view. When the Government are dealing with matters of international importance, matters of delicate negotiation with foreign countries, of which they alone have complete knowledge, hon. Members are very ready to criticise foreign Powers and to criticise the policy of the Government of which they have most inadequate and incomplete knowledge. The matter of marriage is one that is brought home to every Member of the House in some way or another and if, when they have all reached years of discretion, they feel unable to cast a vote on a matter on which most of them have personal knowledge, there are very few questions whatever on which they are fit to give any opinion in the form of a vote in this House. I believe that our constituents would rather that we stood up and had the courage to do what we thought right, even if they disagree with us, than that they should have a silent Member who had not the courage to cast a vote. It is 24 years since the Report of the Royal Commission was published. For a far longer period than that the grounds for divorce have been made a farce and a sham. I hope the Bill will receive a Second Reading by an overwhelming majority. (The votes were 78 in favour and 12 against.)

10. Factories, Widows and Milk 1937

At the beginning of the year Mavis was again struck down with the flu and unable to attend the whist drive at Hemington, her doctor ordered her have complete rest or at least a month causing the cancellation of all appearances until mid-February, although of course she carried on with her voluminous correspondence. The Tates were still living at 39 Cadogan Square and by mid February she was reported to be very much better. Loel Guinness, MP for Bath was still out of the country and Mavis was asked lend her weight to opposing the Local Authorities Enabling Act which would have allowed local councils to establish and carry on a business concerned with the supply of commodities like milk, cream, coal bread, bricks - or anything they thought worthwhile. The Bath Chamber of Commerce were bitterly opposed to this, assuming that a council would have an unfair monopoly over independent traders.

Mavis enthusiasm for aviation had led her to become a director of a South Atlantic air service company which she soon realised was incompatible with a seat in Parliament and the relationship was terminated. A little later she achieved what could be called a moral victory over the establishment. The coronation of Edward VIII was due to take place on 12 May 1937 and as was customary MPs would be allowed to invite their wives. Would women MPs be allowed to bring a male escort? she asked, definitely not was the answer but of the nine women in the House six were unmarried and two were peeresses – which left only Mrs Mavis Tate! It was eventually agreed that she would be allowed to bring Henry, but the coronation never took place due to Edward's abdication over Wallace Simpson. By the middle of February, she had recovered her health sufficiently to speak at an event in Hengrove, Bath criticising the country's ill-equipped air force this time staying at the Pulteney Hotel in Bath. On the 11th she expressed her views in a debate on the Factories Bill.

> Having listened to some of the impassioned speeches from hon. Members opposite I am wondering more than ever why the Labour party itself did not bring forward a Bill of this character when it had the opportunity. One would gather from some of the speeches which have been made that this was a country of sweated workers. That is not the case, most provisions laid down in the Bill are already fulfilled by good employers. It is because we wish to see them fulfilled by all employers that the Bill is being brought forward, but I deplore the fact that children of 14 are to be allowed to go into factories at all. That is definitely something which we should have left behind. The Home Secretary has said that this is the first Bill in connection with factory legislation in which we do not mention children, but those who have brought them up know that what are called young people to-day are children in actual fact. I do not wish to see children of 14 going into the factories, nor do I wish to see young people between the ages of 16 and 18 doing any overtime.
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> It is generally recognised that the health of young people deteriorates after leaving school. We spend some £12,500,000 on our health services in schools, and that money must be largely regarded as wasted if their health deteriorates because they go into factories too early, or have to work under rigorous conditions. These reforms are not incorporated in the Bill. I deplore the fact that women and young persons are classed together. The hon. Member for Wednesbury (Mr. Banfield) asked why we could not organise for better conditions. You will never organise better conditions for the workers until you treat them on the same basis. By classing women and young people together, you are doing something which is detrimental to the young people,

because you are hampered the whole time by the fact that women are classed with them. You will not have nearly so many women in competition with men in industry if you do the only thing which will cure it, - give equal pay for equal work. If you really want to protect women, that is the way to do it—not by putting restrictions on women's labour. Very often their only effect is to give the well-paid jobs to men who organise themselves and are working shorter hours than women. You cannot salve your conscience by pretending that you are protecting women in this way. You may say that women must be protected because they are the mothers of the race. Very well then, they need protection outside industry as well as inside industry. No one will pretend, least of all hon. Members opposite who represent mining constituencies, that women outside industry do not work far too hard and far too long hours.

We do not hear very much about protecting the hours of women by compulsory payment for overtime. What has the Labour party ever done for women? Everything has been done by the party to which I belong or by a coalition government. It was not hon. Members opposite who gave women the vote. they only talk about what they have done for women, and I plead with them not to class women and young people together but put them in separate branches as adult workers. Do not go back to the last century.

On the international front, Mavis signed a declaration from all parties stating that, 'This House notes with satisfaction that in spite of the German colonial demands His Majesty's Government are not considering the cession of any territory' and a little later in the month she gave an address to a women's meeting in Bathford during which it was said that the Frome Division was going to have a fascist candidate at the next election. She was asked if she believed in dictatorship - to which she replied that she did not, - and nor did she believe in Sir Oswald Mosley and she did not think that the Frome Division did either.

In early March she stayed again at the Pulteney Hotel and attended a conservative social event at Brislington, Bristol during which she stated once more that England must be at the forefront of civil aviation if it is to capture foreign markets and during a talk at Milsom Street in Bath she pledged support for increased pensions for retired police officers, after which she attended a ball with her husband at The George Assembly Room in Frome. By the middle of March, the Tates had at last found somewhere that suited them and took a small country house known as Keeper's Cottage, Babington near Kilmersdon. Towards the middle of the month, she gave a talk at Tunbridge Wells Town Hall specially convened for women in support of Conservative candidate Sir Adrian Baillie, before returning to the House, once more bemoaning the state of British air industry,

The House, the press and the country now realise the importance of military aviation, and they also realise that this country is peculiarly vulnerable to attack from the air and that this deadly weapon is being developed very efficiently in many capitals of the world to-day. All of us hope that war is not coming; we hope that, even though late in the day, sanity may prevail and the armament race be abandoned. Should that be the case and we avoid a war, this country will still be faced with very difficult problems. When we have to go back to normal naval, military and air production, and when other countries start turning men from armament factories to civil life, there will then be a type of economic warfare and a race to capture world markets, and one of the most powerful weapons is going to be aviation. When we look at our civil aviation, we cannot but feel intense and profound depression. This country, which has

such an enormous Empire and Empire air routes, is lagging behind in a most serious and terrible way where civil aviation is concerned.

An article by Atticus in the *Sunday Times* during March described Mavis as a 'Left Wing Tory',

> …an attractive and complex personality who asks no quarter on account of her sex and is an authority on health and an enthusiast, without being an expert, on agriculture who believes that we should grow much more of our foodstuffs than we do. No wonder Mr Morrison glances apprehensively at her when he rises to explain the government's agricultural policy. Mrs Tate is also an airwoman and takes her place in air debates as one who knows what she is talking about. Yet she is not a terrifying person. Like Miss Megan Lloyd George and Miss Thelma Cazalet, she brings a pleasant effeminacy to the debates of the House and unlike one or two of her sisters she can sit quite still for an hour at a time. An honest, hard-working MP who believes what she believes without compromise.

On 8 April 1937 the House considered the Widows, Orphans and Old Age Contributory Pensions Bill. The idea was to bring an estimated two million people previously ineligible into the system through voluntary contributions, with an entitlement to £400 for both men and women, as usual Mavis was not slow in putting her point across.

> I believe that the class we are bringing into insurance now has very real need of it. The Minister rightly said that we are providing now for a class who, in the past, have provided for others when they had as great a need. If we are doing that, I think it is the more regrettable that there is in this magnificent Bill an extraordinary injustice to women. The Minister pointed out that the Bill gives great benefits to women—married women and widows. No one would deny that, but the merits of a Bill must depend upon whether it provides for those who are in need and whether it is just. The Minister has certainly not made out a case for justice.
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> He said that we must consider the dependants. We hear a great deal of men being the logical sex, but we are coming to this House to consider Ministers' salaries. May I ask whether we are going to consider them on a basis of dependants? Are we going to decide upon one salary for a married Minister with children, and another salary for an unmarried Minister? I am aware that most of our Ministers have reached the age, when owing to the probably rather fortunate vanity of men, few of them have escaped the meshes of matrimony. Nevertheless, I do not think we shall hear of the argument of dependants. What we are doing in one case let us do in another. Are we going in future to provide salaries and benefits simply on the basis of family obligations and dependants? If so, let us give family allowances or pay people according to the merits of their work and not on their dependants. Do not let us begin introducing this policy by imposing indefensible conditions and restrictions on women. who can least afford to be so treated.
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> No one will deny that old age is very much harder for the woman who has had to support herself, a woman who has had all her life to earn her own living has usually had to do so at a lower salary than a man in the same position would have earned. She has therefore not been able to save as much money as he could have saved. A woman has four years longer expectation of life than a man and it is very much more difficult for a middle-aged woman to retain employment than it is for a man.
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> If this new policy were based on the fact that women earn lower salaries than men you could have no justification for it, for some of the women who are going to be affected by this are not the women who earn lower salaries than men. We are going to bring in small shopkeepers,

dressmakers and music teachers. The small shopkeeper and the lodging-housekeeper may be earning exactly the same amount of money as a man in a like profession. She is probably the only woman who has the opportunity of earning equal wages with a man. A man is allowed to come into this scheme when he is earning less than £400, but he is, unfortunately, more likely than a woman to rise to a very much higher figure than £400 a year. He will probably eventually earn £600, £800 or £1,000 a year and be in much less need of this scheme than a woman who only in very exceptional circumstances is going to be in a position to earn more than £400 a year. I think it is a tragedy that when the Government is bringing in this really magnificent Bill, and when it has done so well that the finances of the country enable us to have such a Bill, that it should be marred by a hideous injustice and should be introducing a new principle that voluntary insurance is to be regulated by the amount of money earned with a differentiation between men and women. We have had injustice between men and women in the past, but it has up to now been in regard to benefits and contributions. We have never before had this wholly new principle brought in that even the salary they earn is to be used to debar women from benefit.

I believe there is another great danger. You will find a certain number of people in the future who will say to a woman 'Of course we would like to raise your salary, but it would not be to your advantage to do it; it would put you out of the scheme of insurance.' That is a very real danger. It is an argument that is almost certain to be used to keep the wages of women, already much too low, down. I beg of the Minister to make this Bill, perfect by removing the inequality to women.

Her attempt was unsuccessful and the income units remained at £400 for men and £250 for women. Hot on the heels of the insurance debate was a proposed amendment to AP Herbert's Marriage Bill deleting the clause that desertion after three years should be grounds for divorce. Given what we know of Mavis's personal circumstances it is no surprise that she was opposed to the amendment,

If one of the two partners to the marriage has left the other with the intent to desert for a period of three years, I consider that the marriage has broken down. If the noble Lord had spent as much time as I have on the bench trying these unhappy cases from the poorer parts of London, he would have no illusions as to whether these marriages have broken down. All that we are asking the House to do is to give relief where marriage no longer exists. The hon. and gallant Member for Camborne said that we were introducing a wholly new idea. If it is a new idea it is one which the country as a whole is anxious to see brought into force. It was not considered a new idea by the Royal Commission which reported in 1912, and I hope that the House will give it support to-day.

The amendment was rejected by 130 votes to 48 and separation after three years became the period allowed for divorce.

Outside of the House her social obligations continued and on 21 April she attended a dinner at the Soviet Embassy for Mr and Mrs Anthony Eden with Mme Maisky the Chinese ambassador and others. Eight days later the brilliant Somerset cricketer, Harold Gimblett, acted as linesman in a football match between Bristol Rovers and Tottenham Hotspur at Badger's Hill in Frome to raise money for the Victoria Hospital Extension Fund and the prize was the handsome silver cup recently donated by Mrs Tate. Spurs won 2-0 and the cup was presented

by Mavis at a dinner held at the George Hotel. A public meeting called by the London and National Society for Women's Service took place on 3 May to protest against the rejection of the recent Bill advocating equal income limits and was attended by Mavis and Nancy Astor.

As we have seen Mavis had strong views on the issue of mental health which she expressed during a debate on the Ministry of Health on 18 June when it was proposed under the somewhat weighty title 'That a sum, not exceeding £16,093,846, be granted to His Majesty, to complete the sum necessary to defray the charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March, 1938, for the Salaries and Expenses of the Ministry of Health; including Grants, a Grant in Aid, and other Expenses in connection with Housing, certain Grants to Local Authorities, etc., Grants in Aid in respect of Benefits, etc., under the National Health Insurance Act, certain Expenses in connection with the widows', Orphans', and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act, and other Services.'

> I wish to draw attention to a problem which, I think, is one of great seriousness in the country and which is costing us over £10,000,000 annually. I noticed that a few days ago the Minister of Health opened a new mental hospital at Runwell. It cost £650,000 to build and will house about 1,000 people. As a mental hospital it is probably an extremely fine place, and the people who go there will receive every care and attention according to our present ideas of what the mentally afflicted should receive. I am acquainted with Shenley Mental Hospital which, in the same way, is a wonderful building in wonderful grounds with a most able and remarkable man at its head. The whole problem is, however, whether that enormous sum of money is really necessary, and whether its expenditure is touching the problem effectively. The cost of the buildings is enormous. Taking the average of the country, the cost of a mentally treated person is about 28/- each after buildings, land, staff, etc., are paid for. That would not matter if the problem were being dealt with. In an article in the *Daily Express* the other day I found this paragraph: 'Thousands of people could be rescued from madness every year if there had been a fund to find out about the mind as much as is known about the body. For £75,000 this country could have the finest mental research laboratory in the world'. That is almost beginning at the wrong end. What is needed is a realisation of the enormous proportion of mental diseases of wholly physical origin, which if they had proper treatment in the early stages would never lead to mental treatment being necessary. In the course of the year I do a certain amount of certifying of the insane, and anyone who does that cannot avoid being struck by the fact that the people one is asked to see fall into two categories. There are what one might describe as the old turbulent lunatic, the human being, whether man or woman, who, in all sympathy I say it, must be regarded as human wreckage. Whether they should ever have been allowed to get to that condition is another matter, but nothing can be done for them beyond keeping them in comfortable conditions and seeing that for the rest of their lives they do as little harm as possible.
>
> But there is another category; there is the human being you are called in to certify who until he had that attack was not human wreckage, was not even an unintelligent human being, but was very often a valuable member of the community. One has to certify them. They go to some lunatic asylum or some mental hospital—as, thank God, we call them now. If they go to Shenley or Runwell doubtless they are examined and have proper treatment. But why were they not examined and treated long before they reached the stage of having an attack? Why are we doing practically nothing to treat these mental diseases in their early stages? Can we always be assured that these people who get these attacks and have to be certified are going to be submitted to a

medical examination which will find out the physical cause of their mental illness? That is not what is going to happen. If they go to Shenley, yes; if they go to Runwell or a few other places, yes. There they will have the luck to have their teeth examined or the sinuses which connect the ear and nose and brain examined or have other treatment. But what happens in a very large majority of cases? They go to some asylum where they will be lucky if they have any medical attention worthy of the name, if any real examination into the physical side of their illness is ever made which I think is such an appalling tragedy.

You have a hospital here, and I hasten to say that this is not a bad hospital for the staff are so good, but I ask whether people living under these conditions are likely to be cured or likely to have the physical side of their illness discovered? This is the Board of Control visiting the hospital and taking complaints from the patients: Few made any complaints except on the score of detention, but a number of female patients' spoke of the overcrowding at night and asked if we realised that they slept on the floor. Upon inquiry we found that 67 patients on the female side are so accommodated. In the dormitory where this overcrowding is worst a patient wishing to get out of bed during the night might very easily step on another patient. In a great many of these mental hospitals there are between 300 and 400 patients to every doctor. In many of them there is practically no dental treatment whatever and the sanitary conveniences are such as would not be allowed in any other building. There is one page in the report in which it is said that it is to be rather deplored that for 83 patients there are only three lavatories and three wash-basins. On another page you find that it is rather a pity that the washing arrangements are such that it is only possible for patients to be washed once a fortnight. In other pages you find that the sanitary accommodation is so scanty that commodes are placed in the dormitories, and some of the patients find the fact that they are not very often emptied rather trying. On other pages you find recommendations that the scrubbing brushes used for the kitchen tables and the lavatory pans would be better if they were not identical and that it would be nice for the patients if they could each have an individual toothbrush. It is really rather unhygienic to keep a few toothbrushes used for so many patients all in the same mug.

shie In another ward people who are very ill are kept at one end of the ward while the other end is used as a dining room and recreation room. I say that money spent on these people is money poured down the drain. To think of anyone going into these conditions, is something that we cannot regard as unimportant; it is quite obvious that we must have more accommodation in many parts of the country. When the public conscience is aroused these conditions will not be allowed to remain. But are we going to build these gigantic colonies, such as Shenley and Runwell at this appalling expense, or are we going to spend money on setting up clinics for the treatment of disease in its very early stages and prevention of the necessity for such enormous asylums? It is for that the money is wanted.

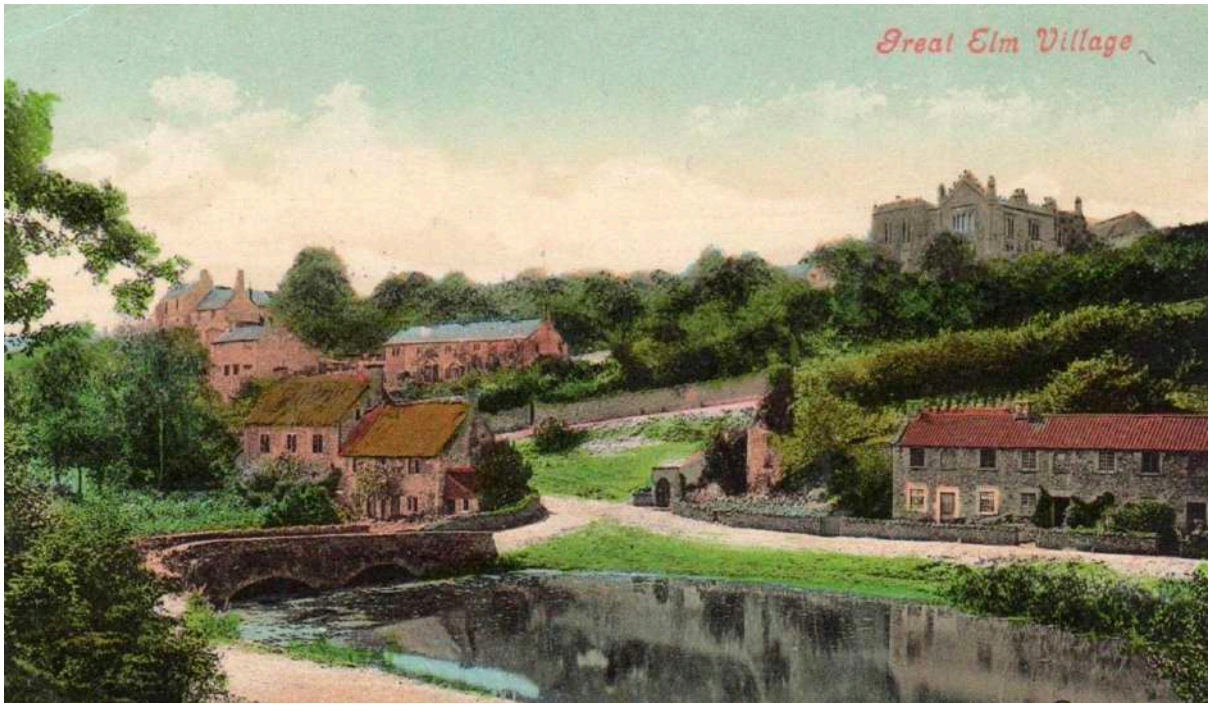
I ask the Minister to suggest to local authorities a wider extension of the work, which is being done at Park Royal, Middlesex, where there is a clinic for the treatment of nervous patients. It is a curious thing, but no one minds being told that he or she is suffering from bad nerves because that is regarded almost as a refined, a rather genteel complaint; but there is an appalling stigma attached to the name, 'mental disease.' Therefore, call them nerve clinics, do everything you possibly can to see that anyone suffering from nervous disease is able to attend a nerve clinic, and that when they do go there their whole physical condition will be properly investigated.

I have spoken sometimes in the country on the treatment of mental disease, and a fairly large number of people who have at some time in their lives been certified have, after their discharge, got in touch with me and asked me whether I would see them. It is a curious thing that no matter from which part of England they came or where they had been under mental treatment, their

complaints are very much the same, not so much of ill treatment as of the extraordinary lack of treatment and ghastly lack of understanding in the treatment.

I know that the outlook upon the treatment of mental disease has improved almost unbelievably in the last half century, but there are these old ideas still in many hospitals, and it is not always the fault of the staff, because in many hospitals it is practically impossible today to get staff. It is not a case of choosing the men or the women who are most suitable to treat the patients, but a case of getting any living human being you can to come and attend to them, and in those circumstances, of course, you must get some very unsuitable people. Any form of nursing is far more a vocation than it is a profession, and how much more that must be so in the case of these poor, unhappy people. Therefore, the staffing question is all important, and the first improvement we ought to make is an improvement in the conditions under which the staff live and work, the patients will not benefit till there is a better staff, and you will not get a better staff until they live under reasonable conditions, which they do not at the present time.

Following the abdication of Edward VIII, a luncheon was held at Westminster Hall on the 7th to welcome delegates from all over the Empire. The menu which Mavis preserved in her scrapbook consisted of cold salmon and cucumber with mayonnaise sauce, hot lamb cutlets new peas and potatoes followed by a strawberry ice pudding and petits fours and ending with coffee. The coronation of the new king, George VI took place on 12 May and William Hickey of the *Daily Express* homed in on Mrs Tate during the service, saying that she looked …extremely well-smiling, dark haired, with long earrings, white furs, resting her chin on her white gloved arm on the rail before her…' In a rather strange move she purchased a blue velvet covered chair which had been used to seat the peers and peeresses at the coronation while she herself had to sit on a stool. She presented the chair to Willesden public library, 'in the hope that, it may be of interest to future generations'. At the end of May she announced that as from early July she is to take a house at Great Elm on the Mells Road standing high on a hill at overlooking the beautiful Vallis Vale. The cottage was formerly named Ryde House, but she re-named it Greenleaves and invited party members to take a tea with her.



Great Elm in about 1910

As part of her other constituency duties she broadcast an appeal on behalf of the Frome Victoria Hospital, attended Chew Magna fete in aid of St Andrews church tower and opened a valve at Frome gasworks to inaugurate the supply of gas from Bath which would provide cheap gas to the town and surrounding villages. On 2 July at the British Legion fete in Coleford she made a quick speech before opening a fete at Chew Magna and then judging a baby show at Peasedown which seems not to have gone as well it might as she received some letters expressing dissatisfaction at the way in which it was judged and organised. Mr Gill, secretary of the Peasdown Carnival responded, 'I realise that the show became very disorganised which made it extremely difficult for the judges and although a number of mothers were displeased with the arrangements made, Mrs Tate was kind enough to give a handsome prize in addition to acting as a judge and I'm very surprised to hear that she is being blamed by some people for the state of pandemonium which did unfortunately exist at the baby show.'

That same month she attended the 13th annual conference of the British Commonwealth League and was well received with the reporter stating that she gave admirable and practical advice as to how it is possible to work for more women in Parliament. 'It is easy', the reporter stated, 'after listening to her to understand how she won over local political executives, most reluctant to have a woman candidate foisted on them, to become her most loyal and enthusiastic supporters. Direct, unaffected and witty, every word of her speech was worth listening to. Her main points were that women must join local political organisations, be prepared to attend all meetings, and do routine work until it is recognised that they really are prepared to work and can be counted on to carry out what they undertake to do which may win them places of influence on those bodies. If day-to-day work is impossible for them, they should be prepared to offer that service at election time to the women candidates. If it is not possible to give personal time even small financial contributions to party funds for women candidates can have

an effect, Meanwhile, back in the House on 5 July she expressed her rather surprising views on pasteurised milk,

> I have constant complaints from mothers of the children in the schools in my constituency that one of the reasons why they do not care for the milk is that it is pasteurised, and I think it is time we had a real impartial inquiry as to the relative value of pasteurised and unpasteurised milk. I notice with very great concern that the Minister frequently makes remarks tending to stress the value of pasteurised milk, but I cannot help thinking that that is very largely an organised campaign on the part of the distributors, because there is no possible doubt that they cannot keep their milk fresh unless they pasteurise it because the milk is not really clean. If you produced really clean milk—anyone can make the test for himself—it does not go sour under at least 48 hours, but the milk that we are supplied with in London is sour within a very few hours.
>
> Some very careful inquiries should be made as to the relative nutritive value of pasteurised milk, and also as to whether that is not one of the factors tending to make milk an unpopular drink. We have now had the milk-in-schools scheme for three or four years, and there should be leaving school a generation of children who have acquired a taste for it, but if inquiry were made I think it would be found that very few children who have left school have continued with the milk habit. We are spending some £60,000 a year in advertising milk, and on the 'Drink more Milk' campaign, £30,000 of which is supplied by the Milk Marketing Board. It is about time some of that money was spent on advertising the right way in which to serve milk. The hon. and learned Member for Bridgwater wondered what the reaction would be if he were to ask a Member of the House to go out and have a glass of milk with him instead of some other beverage. If he went downstairs and asked for a glass of milk, he would get it served in a jug, and it would be a miracle if the jug was clean. I do not wish to comment on the bad and expensive food that we are given here, but all over the country milk as a rule is served in an unappetising way. Where it is served in a more appetising way for instance in the milk bars, it is beginning to be a very great success.

Amongst other pressing matters of the day during July of 1937 was the question of dyed kippers to be considered under the, Sea Fish (Dyeing and Colouring Prohibition) this banned the display or sale of any such fish exposed for sale. (she was in favour of prohibition). Her engagements for August and September included laying the foundation stone for the new wing of the Paulton Memorial Hospital and opening their 17th annual fete to raise funds. In an address to a National Conservative Demonstration at East Harptree over which she presided she said that she thought there was less danger of a European war today that there had been for some time. She opened the Peasdown Horticultural Association show, gave a long lecture on farming at Newton Park, opened the 38th annual Mells show and broadcast an appeal on behalf of Frome Hospital. Such frantic activity seems to have come at a cost. On 24 September she had to undergo an immediate operation while struck down with a serious illness abroad but made a full recovery. There is no record of where she was or what the problem was but she had suffered from recurring bouts of kidney trouble so perhaps it was kidney stones. By the 23 October she was back in the public eye when she addressed a meeting of the Conservative Association at Midsomer Norton on amendments and revisions to the constitution. In the Commons the following December she objected to the rise in food prices and again argued against the pasteurisation of milk which she claimed gave the beverage a disagreeable taste.

On perhaps what is the only record of her service as a magistrate she was asked to judge a case of a butcher's roundsman accused of not handing over the money he had collected. A witness for the defence was asked if she had a good memory to which she replied that she had a most excellent one. 'Then tell me', exclaimed Mrs Tate, 'why you came prepared with that typewritten paper that you are trying so unsuccessfully to hide?' The defendant was bound over for 12 months in the sum of £10. On the eve of Christmas, she was once more stricken with the flu which began on the Monday before and grew worse as the week progressed, she was expected to be in bed for a week or two but made a brief appearance with her husband at the Mells whist drive and dance. Unable to attend a dinner of Keynsham farmers she sent a letter of support opposing pasteurisation.

Mavis was invited again to send her Christmas Greetings via the *Somerset Standard* in which she expressed great sorrow at the abdication of Edward VIII, praised the various charities alleviating hardship and wished that the government would do more to help.

11. Housing and Separation 1938

The New Year opened with Mavis still at Greenleaves, about two miles from Frome. During a visit in January 1938 a reporter from the *Bath Chronicle* described her situation.

> As well as renaming the cottage Mrs Tate has designed the lawns and paths so that the outcroppings of rock and woods beyond form part of the landscape with rose beds herbaceous borders and cypress hedges. The flower beds around the house were packed with more flowers and best of all snowdrops flowering around the stem of the winter jasmine. She planned the garden herself with the help of Mr Bates the gardener. She is assisted at the house by butler Albert Stokes former butler for Captain Southey of Eastleigh Court, Warminster and Sir Harold Pelly of Gillingham, his wife Emma Stokes was housekeeper. During the visit Mrs Tate said that her health was much improved and after a rest of about a fortnight she fully intended to get back to work at her old pace. Bizarrely the conversation turned towards betting during which she expressed the opinion that the upper classes had the advantage as all they had to do was pick up the phone to lay a bet where is the poor man was beset by restrictions. A greater equality might one day be brought about by a private member's bill she opined. As the newspaper reporter left Mrs Tate was preparing to answer some letters from constituents before changing her attire to attend a children's tea at Great Elm after which she was catching the 5.06 train from Westbury to London. She received some good news later in the month when the local Council granted permission for 'certain additions' to Greenleaves.

Mavis wrote to *The Times* on 11 January arguing, with the support of Lady Horner, against the bussing of rural children from small village schools to towns and opposing the plan to build a large school at Writhlington to which school children over the age of 11 will be taken daily. New schools were being built at a cost of £35,000 for a declining population when there were schools around Frome which could be enlarged and improved. She claimed that in many cases the parents deplored the taking of children from villages to towns and described the scheme as disastrous and costly. Her view was supported by the Swainswick Conservative Association

but the chairman of the Somerset Education Committee described her case as 'overstated'. During January Mavis needed some domestic help and engaged a married couple through an agency only to discover that not only were they unmarried but that they were wanted by the police on 18 charges. The situation was almost a re-run of the situation in 1930 when she had been offered bogus servants. Mavis came to realise that the 'servant swindle' as she came to call it was robbing housewives of thousands of pounds a year not least by the agency charging 'massive booking fees'.

> 'The whole system is criminal,' Mrs Tate said in the *Daily Sketch*, 'some registry offices all over the country are charging booking fees and failing to supply the servants. Housewives see an advertisement for a particular servant-who probably doesn't exist and are asked to pay a booking fee of 2/6d, 3/6d or even 7/6d. Often the matter ends there. They never see their money back – or their servant. One agency charges £1/10/6d for butlers or parlour maids, £1/5/6d for under servants. It also charges the servants a percentage of the first year's wages. It is robbery! The fault lies with modern girls who think domestic service is degrading. Registry offices have been forced to swindle housewives to make a living. Some London agencies are so short of servants that to keep themselves going and get fees they persuade servants to take temporary posts. If they do send you a servant they perpetually write to her to take interviews for other jobs so as to draw another fee.

Later in the month Mavis left for a two week holiday in France during which time the agreed extensive alterations were being carried out at Greenleaves, meaning that the house was uninhabitable for six weeks while it was enlarged and updated. Back in the Commons she took part in a debate on the Housing Bill with particular reference to rural areas,

> Hon. Members opposite have made a great complaint that under this Bill we are helping individuals—I think they called them the landlords—to build houses. Surely what we want is to get houses built. hon. Members were very interested in the scarcity of houses in rural areas, and rightly so. No one will deny, I think, that the county councils already have their hands very full and that if they are helped by the individual builder and private enterprise, we shall get the number of houses we need very much more quickly than if it is left to the councils alone. Also we hope that the county councils will build the houses in the villages, as the Minister said, but there are small farmers and in some cases agricultural workers who want houses in isolated places, and there, I should like to endorse what the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Mr. Turton) said when he asked whether the Government would consider, in the case of the small farmer or the agricultural labourer who has not got the capital to build a house, even with the £10 loan, of giving him the money in a lump sum. I feel that many people would build houses if they were able to have a capital grant, even if they had to pay interest on the sum borrowed.
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> We are grateful to the Minister for saying that he is anxious to see houses built more in harmony with their surroundings. All of us feel that this has been an age in which much of beauty, particularly the beauty of rural England, has been destroyed, and I feel that pious aspirations are no longer quite enough. In the Town and Country Planning Act certainly we have a permissive section, when you look at many of the buildings which are spoiling the beauty of England, you feel that the time has come for requiring some standard to be laid down before houses are permitted to be built. I do not think the fact of having been able to pass an examination and qualify as an architect necessarily ensures a standard of taste, and I should like houses to be put up for open competition in order that the better designs might be chosen.

In early February she came out against a proposal for the compulsory amalgamation of various coal mines under a newly introduced Coal Bill, 'Compulsory amalgamation will certainly be fatal for some of the Somerset mines which are just managing to pay' she commented and was relieved that the terms of the Bill were changed so that any such amalgamation would have to be first brought before the House, 'Had the Bill not been altered I would have opposed compulsory amalgamation even to the extent of a vote in the lobby'. At a meeting of The Women's Advertising Club of London in March, Mavis said she was glad to see that the members, '…believed in presenting a good appearance to the world', but it was reported that hundreds of other women outside the club are not feeling too pleased with Mrs Tate for saying that she met many women in clubs and movements who became too earnest to care about how they looked which distracted from their value to their cause, 'No woman,' she said in reply, 'does her job better for being dowdy.'

Despite all the politics and hard work there was still time for a bit of fun. Nancy Astor held a house party Cliveden which Mavis attended and among the guests were Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, Government Chief Whip, Edward FitzRoy, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Clarence Dillon an American financier, Dr Thomas Jones along with assorted friends and relations. 'instead of all secret discussions after dinner they played musical chairs, obviously a favourite of Lady Astor, followed by Mrs Chamberlain putting her heart and soul into being the horse winning the National on all fours but at moderate speed, they listened to a broadcast by the great pianist Myra Hess and in the dining, room talk flew ceaselessly and noisily between Nancy, quick-witted, slightly aggressive, and not listening very much to her guests however important. 'There are times,' she said to speaker Fitzroy, when I get so fed up with the House that I wish I were dead.' 'There are times, replied the Speaker, 'when I wish you were too.' To describe her as eccentric is perhaps to understate the case.

Behind the public façade Mavis was having problems. At a meeting on the 6 May she stated that she was finding it extremely difficult to pay her annual contribution of £400 to the Conservative Association and told subsequent meetings that she hoped efforts could be made to bridge the difficulty by reducing the amount.

Mavis was mentioned at a May Day meeting in the Frome Temperance Hall attended by Sir Stafford Cripps and organised by the local Labour Party in support of 200 textile employees in the town fighting for the right to join a trade union. Prospective Labour candidate RW Mackay expressed the view that 'Mrs Tate was not fit to represent the constituency because of the foreign policy she had adopted in the last few months' presumably referring to her continued support for Chamberlain. Returning once more to her strong views on pasteurisation, Mavis revealed during a speech in Bath that she kept three families of rats for experimental purposes. She fed one family on raw milk, one on boiled milk and the third on pasteurised milk. Those on boiled were three parts stunted and those on pasteurised were completely stunted. Other topics which engaged her attention at the time was the supply of labour to which she contributed,

> There is a type of woman, a clerk, say, who finds it almost impossible to obtain employment— the deserted wife, for instance, with young children. In a large town there are considerable numbers of such women, and it seems to me that if we could set up some really efficient creche and nursery home, where the women could receive training for skilled domestic

labour and could then be allowed to take daily work, you would not separate them from their young children, and you would rehabilitate them and make; them able to earn a useful and appreciably comfortable living, whereas at present they are living in acute anxiety, very often with real suffering and misery, and finding it almost impossible to get any kind of work. They are obliged to apply for relief, with occasional applications to the courts for their maintenance allowance, which, as hon. Members who work in courts know, it is often almost impossible to collect. I wish to draw those few matters to the attention of the Minister.

On rural cottages she was ahead of her time in fighting for their preservation by asking: 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to restrict the demolition of rural cottages certified as reconditioned or subject to reconditioning, to amend the Housing Act, 1936, and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid'.

To restrict, the scandal of the demolition of cottages in rural areas when the owners are prepared to re-condition them. In the countryside to-day a considerable number of cottages, often owner-occupied —sometimes of considerable architectural merit, and frequently in beautiful and healthful surroundings, which, with the expenditure of a comparatively small amount of money could be rendered desirable homes—are being destroyed in order that local authorities may obtain a generous Government grant towards re-housing the inhabitants in houses much less well built, of no architectural merit, in surroundings the beauty of which they have for ever disfigured, at rents the tenants can ill afford. An Act for which the Ministry of Health is responsible is causing acute unhappiness, and wanton destruction.

The Bill was opposed by George Tomlinson, (Farnworth)

I wish to oppose the Motion. if this Bill were accepted by the House, I think it would undermine the Housing Act, the Slum Clearance Act and a great deal of really valuable work that has been done in the attempt to deal with this problem.

Mrs Tate asked the Minister of Health how many of the 176,466 homes earmarked for slum clearance by local authorities had actually been removed and the answer was that by the end of 1937 104,000 had been demolished. She followed this up in July with a strong objection to the demolition of some cottages in Timsbury,

I wish I could think that every house that is being built as a result of slum clearance activity was in actual fact replacing a slum house. Unhappily, in isolated instances what could be made perfectly good houses are being torn down in order to build a council house of very doubtful construction. Some of the houses that are being put up do not compare in quality of building with the houses that they are replacing. The Minister has been exceedingly sympathetic to difficulties which have arisen in my own constituency, and I would urge upon him that until these can be amended to give power of appeal to people whose houses have been scheduled under a clearance order in a rural district, instructions should be given to local authorities not to press forward too rapidly with the demolition of cottages the owners of which are ready to repair and make sound those cottages at their own expense.

In some cases, aged inhabitants occupy cottages which it is proposed to demolish, and I urge that in such cases the cottages should be spared if, the buildings could be made sound enough to last the lifetime of the occupier. In my division is a cottage which is only 10 years old. It is proposed to demolish it, but a local builder has certified that it is sound. He has said upon his authority that it is criminal even to consider pulling it down. The inhabitant is a [9]crippled

> woman of 80 years of age. A local doctor has said that the threat to her house has already gravely endangered her health, and that if the order is confirmed and she is forced to move, it will almost certainly mean her death. I urge that in isolated cases such as this the cottage should be spared during the lifetime of the owner.

During July an article appeared in the *Sunday Express* in which the author stated that some MPs were considering standing down at the next election and that, 'one of them is Mrs Tate the member for Frome. I predict that she will not fight there again, and I shall be sorry if my prediction comes true she is a first-rate member.' At a meeting at Weston Manor House in Bath, she declared that the rumours which had been doing the rounds for two to three months were totally untrue, 'that was written by a man who before the last election stated that I was bound to be beaten when I stood for this division. There's just as much truth in what he wrote as there was in his first statement, (applause) he is not a very reliable man. I asked *The Times* to contradict the statement that had been made in the *Sunday Express* and their reply was, 'Do you really think is necessary to contradict what appears in *that* paper? (laughter and applause). There was much debate locally about the state of agriculture with the National Farmers Union wondering whether it should support the National Government after having accused it of having done nothing. Mrs Tate's reply was, 'I do not say that agriculture is in a satisfactory state today and I do not consider the government has done everything they might have done it is a gross ingratitude to say that nothing has been done but it has been neglected for a great many years'.

At a meeting in Brislington during November she gave her view that Germany could continue with its a present policy but, 'Any dictatorship can build up a wonderful army and can look after the young people but you cannot have permanent strength by persecution'. She believed that the persecution of the Jews would eventually lead Germany into internal problems as racial and religious persecution could not go on indefinitely. She was convinced that 'Chamberlain did a wonderful thing to ensure peace, which is not an easy thing to obtain in the world today'. She would be willing to consider the return of some of the colonies to Germany if the persecutions ended and discussions around general disarmament took place, but the colonies would have to be willing and this would have to be with the approval of the League of Nations. Mavis continued her punishing round of meetings, debates and lectures but things were far from well at home.

On 17 December she sent a telegram to say that she was unable to attend the annual fat stock dinner at the Wingrove Hotel in Keynsham stating that she had just undergone an operation for an abscess in her ear. On this occasion, she could also have been forgiven for suffering from a deep depression. Three days later on the 20th a Deed of Separation was signed between her and her husband Henry Burton Tate, shortly after which her stepdaughter Julia left her father and went to live with Mavis. Such a deed is a legal agreement made between a married couple who have decided they no longer want to live together. The agreement sets out the couple's rights and responsibilities to each other and any children of the relationship. Both people in the relationship must agree to the terms in order to make it legally binding. The rumours of her decision to withdraw from Parliament at the next election were almost certainly due to Henry withdrawing any financial support as their relationship broke down. Despite all this she still took the trouble to send out a large number of Christmas cards from Greenleaves.

12. Appeasement and the Origins of War

Before we continue with Mavis Tate and her role during the war years it might be as well to take an overview and examine the start of the conflict which engulfed the world at the end of the 1930s. The origins of the Second World war undoubtedly lie in the events following the first which ended in November 1918. The mass slaughter that this entailed shattered the old-world order and cost the lives of almost one million soldiers of the Empire with another two million disabled or incapacitated. It meant economic disaster for Britain and enabled the Bolsheviks to take control of Russia. During his general election campaign of 1918 Lloyd George, who had been the leader of the wartime coalition promised the electorate that Germany would be made to pay the full cost of the war. The leaders of the victorious nations met in January 1919 and produced what came to be known as the Treaty of Versailles. This reduced Germany's armed forces to 100,000, conscription was banned and tanks and aircraft were prohibited or confiscated. Its colonies were taken away and the payment of over £6 million for war reparations was demanded. On top of this Germany was forced to accept full responsibility for the conflict. The treaty was supposed to have been a deal between all European nations to ensure peace and prosperity but in practice it satisfied no one and created the artificial states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia along with the ineffectual League of Nations. Many believed that Germany had been treated to harshly and were prepared to make concessions, which formed part of what became known as the policy of appeasement.

Germany itself saw the rise of the Weimar Republic, a series of unstable coalition governments torn between extremists of left and right with a bankrupt economy and inflation at unmanageable levels. Unsurprisingly Germany was unable to pay its war reparations which resulted in the French occupying the industrial Ruhr region during nine months of 1923, eventually a deal was reached whereby the Americans would lend money to help Germany meet its debts. This arrangement fell apart with the Wall Street crash of 1929 giving rise to what became known as the Hungry 30s and the great depression with mass unemployment and the collapse of agricultural prices.

In Britain the Labour government fell and was replaced by a National Government led by Ramsay McDonald in 1931.McDonald sympathised with Germany's plight and disarmament conferences were organised between the European nations but the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933 saw that country withdraw and negotiations collapse; it also caused the policy of appeasement to be seen in a different light. While concessions that would see Germany brought back into the European fold as a fully democratic country as part of a process of reconciliation seemed quite reasonable, dealing with a country run by an extremely nationalistic and expansionist demagogue determined to restore his country's military might was quite a different matter.

For the first few years the British government was uncertain of which path to take; they were unsure how far to push the policy of appeasement and equally unsure that a strong military build-up at home was the answer. Popular surveys showed that the overwhelming majority wanted peace after the horrors of the trenches only a few years before. There was also some support for the way in which the Nazi party had provided strong leadership in a country that was demoralised and fragmented and Hitler's objections to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were thought reasonable. It was also the case that Britain's armed forces had been reduced in capacity since the 'War to End Wars' and were in no condition to fight another. There was

another, perhaps overriding consideration. The Soviet Union was growing in strength and influence throughout Europe and Hitler's Germany was seen as a serious impediment to its ambitions; it was thought by some that its anti-Semitism and brutal tactics were a fair price to pay for peace.

During the military build-up in Germany in the 1930s, Lord and Lady Astor promoted entente with Germany and the appeasement of Hitler. Many of their associates felt sympathy for the state of Germany after World War I, feared communism, and supported the position of the British government. Astor held anti-Semitic views and in the 1930s he expressed the view that Germany was criticised because, 'Newspapers are influenced by those firms which advertise so largely in the press and are frequently under Jewish control.' However, Nancy was critical of the Nazis, mostly on women's rights. Viscount Astor's anti-Semitism was non-violent, and he even protested to Hitler about the treatment of the Jews. Many people in England were concerned about the rise of Germany but still very fearful of Russian communism and saw Germany as the main defence against it. Von Ribbentrop the German ambassador had been a guest of the Astors in the spring of 1936 along with American and Russian ambassadors. In September the Munich Agreement between Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy, provided cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory of Czechoslovakia. Most of Europe celebrated because it prevented the war threatened by Hitler by allowing Nazi Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland, a region of western Czechoslovakia inhabited by 800,000 people, mainly German speakers. Hitler announced it was his last territorial claim in Europe, and the choice seemed to be between war and appeasement.

At the beginning of the 1930s, concessions were widely seen as positive due to the trauma of World War I, second thoughts about the treatment of Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, and a perception that Fascism was a useful form of anti-communism. However, by the time of the Munich Pact—concluded on 30 September 1938 among Germany, Britain, France, and Italy—the policy was opposed by most of the British left and Labour Party, by Conservative dissenters such as Winston Churchill and Duff Cooper, Sir Austin Chamberlain and even by Anthony Eden, a former proponent of appeasement. Lord Londonderry, the Astors, and the Earl of Dudley stood for making allowances for Germany and on the other side there were those who feared Germany's growth and were prepared to join Russia with France against Hitler. The supporters of appeasement were a diverse bunch ranging from the Church of England, the Conservative Party and a number of right-wing elements who were both anti-communist and anti-Semitic, along with genuine pacifists who would oppose war at any cost.. There was a government policy of control, secrecy and censorship over what was allowed to be reported from Nazi Germany.

Things were beginning to change, however and by the early part of 1936 Germany could no longer be seen as a weak and defeated power and had begun to be seen as a threat to peace in Europe again is it reoccupied the demilitarised Rhineland. Once more the fear of war gave rise to excuses and the feeling that Hitler was only, 'going into his own back garden.' Things escalated further when Hitler and Mussolini came together in their support for General Franco as civil war erupted in Spain, and the main government emphasis was to avoid war at all costs, while undertaking a rebuilding of Britain's defensive forces. In 1913 30% of government expenditure went on defence by 1933 this had dropped to a mere 10%. The main emphasis of

this policy of rearmament was to be the air force with the army allowed to reduce in both numbers and equipment, while the Royal Navy although still one of the most powerful fleets in the world was overextended internationally with no new ships being commissioned. Fear of air attack was paramount. Overall, it is thought that British rearmament started too late to be an effective deterrent to Germany with both the level of spending and industrial capacity being far too low. Neville Chamberlain who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1931 to 1937 cutback on military expenditure in favour of the domestic economy feeling that this fitted in well with a mood of the electorate as did his policy of building up military forces to defend the homeland and the Empire rather than foreign adventures in Europe. But as the threat became more real the government was forced to accelerate the pace of rearmament.

On 12 March 1938 the German Army marched over the Austrian border and achieved its union with Germany without a shot being fired. Czechoslovakia consisted of a number of diverse nationalities brought together in a multi-ethnic state by the agreements of 1919. One of these groups consisted of over three million German speakers who lived on the frontier with Germany and Austria known as Sudetenland and many of its inhabitants were keen to join Hitler's Reich prompting a crisis which led Chamberlain to fly out to Germany for a meeting with Hitler in September of 1938 during which Hitler demanded the transfer of all districts in Czechoslovakia which contained 50% German speakers and Chamberlain agreed in principle. The Czech government was told to accept this deal or face invasion by Germany and reluctantly agreed, upon which Hitler, doubtless seeing this as a sign of weakness made a further demands leading to a further meeting in Munich on 29 September which resulted in Hitler agreeing to rein in some of his claims and Chamberlain returning with the famous piece of paper, which guaranteed as he put it, 'peace for our time'. Not everybody in the government was convinced and in October of 1938 the defence budget was increased to £2.1 billion or 21.4% of the gross national product.

'Peace For Our Time' 30 September 1938

In April of 1939 Chamberlain re-introduced conscription for men over 20 and on 23 August Hitler and Stalin came to an agreement to form a pact of non-aggression. Stalin's military forces were weak and this bought him some time; on 1 September Hitler invaded Poland and on 3 September Neville Chamberlain announced on the radio that 'Britain is at war with Germany.'

13. British Fascism and the Red Book

In May of 1939 just months before the outbreak of war Captain Archibald Ramsay, Conservative MP for Peebles and Southern Midlothian since 1931, formed an organisation which he called The Right Club the stated aim of which was to 'oppose and expose the activities of Organised Jewry in the light of the evidence which came into my possession in 1938. Our objective was to clear the Conservative Party of Jewish influence, and the character of our membership and meetings were strictly in keeping with this objective.'

Unlike the other pro-fascist organisations, the club and its members were to operate as a secret society and their initial aim was to recruit influential people amongst the establishment and aristocracy. The need for secrecy, according to Ramsay was to avoid retaliation from groups with opposing views be they Jews, Communists, or others on the left. A more likely reason is fear for their reputations should any association with openly pro-Nazi groups become public.

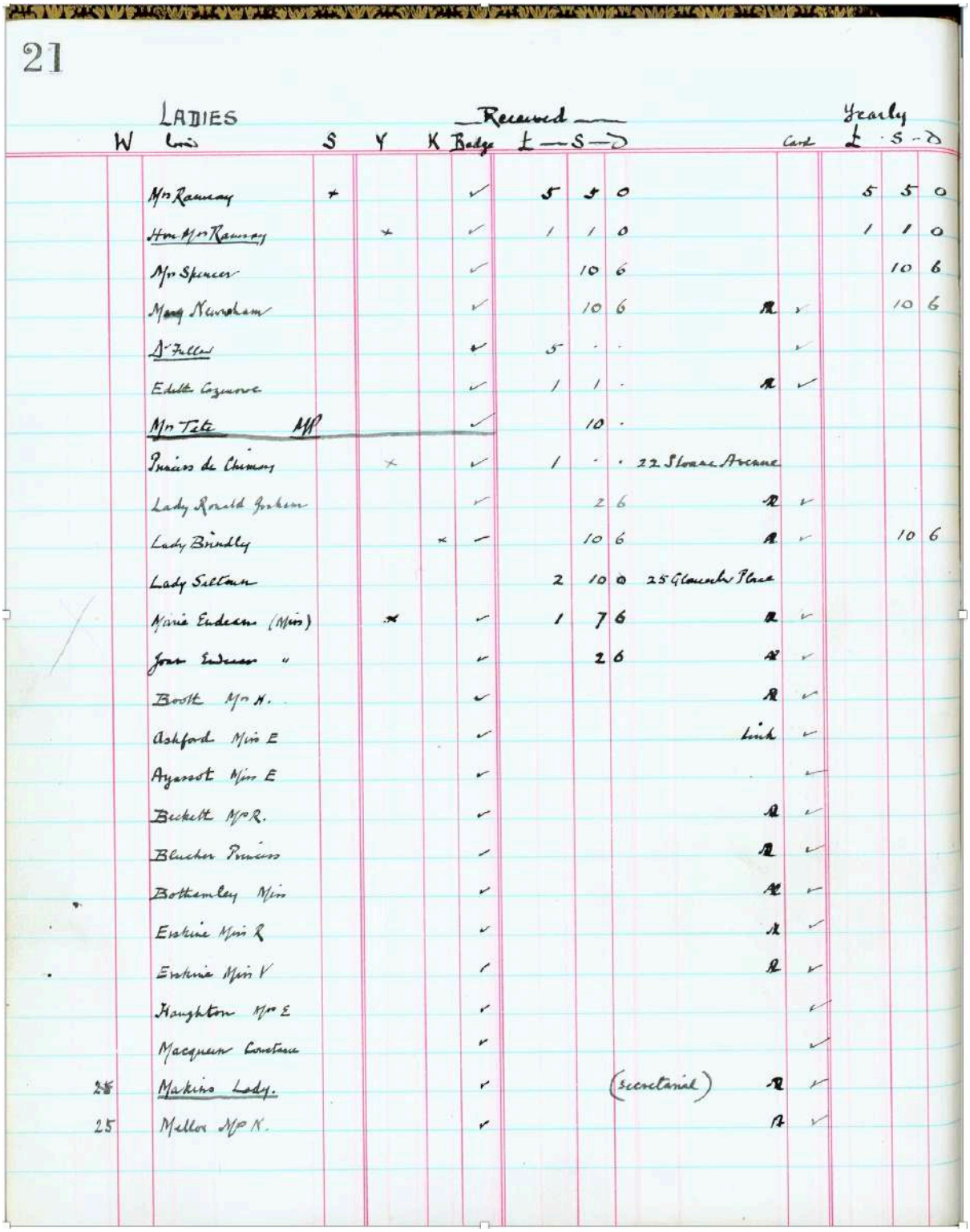
Captain Archibald Ramsay

Ramsay was an interesting character, born in Scotland in 1894, he was educated first at Eton and then at Sandhurst Military College form where he joined the Coldstream Guards in 1913. After serving in France during WWI he worked for the War Office and became increasingly concerned about the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union which he was convinced was part of an international Jewish plot to take over the world. Ramsay's fear of communism led him to become a strong supporter of the nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War and the propaganda put out by Hitler's Germany which claimed that the real power in the Soviet Third International was a group of revolutionary Jews. Ramsay was firmly committed to the view that there was an international Judaeo-Bolshevik plot with tentacles stretching out from New York and Moscow and whose major aim was to begin a war between Britain and Germany.

Exactly how the Jewish usurer and capitalist could be happily in a conspiracy with the anti-capitalist Bolsheviks was not explained, but then extremism has little use for reason. A dedicated Christian, Ramsay founded an organisation known as the United Christian Front with the aim of uniting church leaders in combating attacks on Christianity which he also believed

were directed from Moscow. Ramsay was by all accounts a fairly pedestrian MP concerned mainly with Scottish and agricultural matters. Perhaps lacking the potential for high government office, (he was to eventually to reach a senior position in the Potato Marketing Board governing their regulation, production and sale), he emerged as the leading figure of the extreme right in British politics and became head of the pro-Nazi Nordic League which described itself as 'an association of race conscious Britons and being at the service of those patriotic bodies known to be engaged in exposing and frustrating the Jewish stranglehold on our Nordic realm.' The League saw itself as superior to Mosley's British Union of Fascists which attracted a more working-class membership.

He intended his Right Club to bring together all the different anti-Soviet and anti-Jewish groups in Britain, or 'patriotic societies' as he called them and he began by recruiting like-minded people to help him in ridding the Conservative Party of anything he saw as Jewish. He made a list of sympathisers and collected money for his club and all these details he entered into a thick leather-bound ledger which has become known as the *Red Book*. The book contained the names of 235 people, 135 men and 100 women including the Duke of Wellington, William Joyce (later Lord Haw Haw), Sir Ernest Bennett, Molly Stanford, Christabel Nicholson, Enid Riddell, Anne van Lennep, and Anna Wolkoff. The name of an MI5 agent who had infiltrated the Right Club, Marjorie Amor, is also present, as are those of close members of Ramsay's own family. It includes twelve MPs.



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W	Ladies	S	Y	K	Badge	Received £	S	D		Card	Yearly £	S	D
	Mrs Ramsay	x			✓	5	5	0			5	5	0
	Hon Mrs Ramsay		x		✓	1	1	0			1	1	0
	Mrs Spencer				✓		10	6				10	6
	Mary Newsham				✓		10	6		R ✓		10	6
	S. Fuller				✓	5	.	.		✓			
	Edith Cazenove				✓	1	1	.		R ✓			
	Mrs Tate MP				✓		10	.					
	Princess de Chimay		x		✓	1	.	.	22 Sloane Avenue				
	Lady Ronald Gordon				✓		2	6		R ✓			
	Lady Brindley			x	✓		10	6		R ✓		10	6
	Lady Sutton					2	10	0	25 Gloucester Place				
	Maria Endean (Miss)		x		✓	1	7	6		R ✓			
	Jane Endean "				✓		2	6		R ✓			
	Booth Mrs H.				✓					R ✓			
	Ashford Miss E				✓					Link ✓			
	Ayscough Miss E				✓					✓			
	Beckett Mrs R.				✓					R ✓			
	Blucher Princess				✓					R ✓			
	Bottomley Miss				✓					R ✓			
	Erskine Miss R				✓					R ✓			
	Erskine Miss V				✓					R ✓			
	Houghton Mrs E				✓					✓			
	Macqueen Constance				✓					✓			
25	Makins Lady.				✓				(secretarial)	R ✓			
25	Mellor Mrs K.				✓					R ✓			

Page 21 of the *Red Book*

On page two, seven lines down is the name *Mrs Tate* with the initials *MP* which seem to have been added at a later date and her name is underlined possibly at the same time; one column is ticked to indicate that she had either received a badge or was eligible for one and another column records that she had donated ten shillings to the group. There are no further

remarks against her name. The badge consisted of an eagle killing a snake with the initials 'PJ' for Perish Judah beneath, though why a secret society would have a badge is interesting. There is another column to show whether a card had been issued and in Mavis's case it had not.

There can be little doubt that the *Red Book* is genuine, but it must be approached with care. It should be born in mind that this is a pre-war list which means that, unless evidence exists of war time activity those mentioned should be given benefit of the doubt as to their war time allegiances, many people who belonged to organisations such as this in the pre-war period behaved in an entirely patriotic manner once war was declared. Some may have joined for anti-communist rather than anti-Semitic or pro-fascist reasons, but the fact remains that Ramsay was a very outspoken anti-Semite and they were joining an organisation which did not separate one from the other. The book was compiled by Ramsay himself, and it is not signed or endorsed by those listed in it, though the addition of various sums paid adds credence to their agreement to be included but simple list of names compiled by one man proves nothing in itself. The people included must have been aware of Ramsay's more outrageous views and would have gone into it with their eyes open to a certain extent but only when the ideas, political views, affiliations, activities, personal acquaintance with Ramsay are investigated will it provide some insight into why they are here and with that in mind it makes sense to look at Mavis's associates within the house and without.

When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939 many on the right were dismayed by such an aggressive move and became disillusioned, but many more still saw Germany as the only defence against the world-wide Jewish conspiracy and the threat of Soviet communism. In 1940, the Astors urged Neville Chamberlain to resign and supported Churchill as replacement. They supported the war against Germany when it came although both remained uncomfortable with Joseph Stalin as an ally (from 1941).

Unknown to Ramsay his club had been infiltrated by MI5 agents and so the government was pretty aware of who was doing what amongst the extreme right. When war broke out in September the government passed a piece of legislation known as the Defence Regulation Order or 18B which gave the Home Secretary the right to imprison anybody believed to 'endanger the safety of the realm.' One of the last members to join the Right Club was a 29-year-old cipher clerk at the American Embassy in London named Tyler Kent., Kent was introduced to Ramsay and the club by Anna Wolkoff, a staunchly anti-Semitic White Russian and the daughter of an Imperial Russian navy admiral who had been reduced to running a cafe in South Kensington, called the Russian Tea Rooms. The Wolkoffs had fallen on hard times and were an embittered pair, their establishment became a gathering place for disaffected émigrés like themselves along with pro-Nazi Britons who shared their fanatical hatred for Jews and Bolsheviks. Wolkoff led the aristocratic women in the group in nightly outings plastering anti-Semitic posters and stickers on back-alley walls in London.

After the outbreak of war Ramsay gave Kent the *Red Book* for safe-keeping, thinking that his flat would be the best hiding place for this dangerously compromising document. As an American, Kent held diplomatic immunity but used his position to pilfer copies of top-secret telegrams sent between Churchill and Roosevelt. These letters contained Churchill’s open, frank, and urgent appeals to Roosevelt for American assistance in the war and as the correspondence was intimate and unofficial its exposure would be political dynamite on both sides of the Atlantic. Ramsay’s involvement with Kent was a concern of great importance to

British security authorities since Ramsay, as a member of Parliament, enjoyed parliamentary privilege: If Kent handed over his stolen documents to Ramsay, it would have been impossible to prevent their publication, which may very well have sabotaged Britain's war initiative and set in motion the complete takeover of Europe by the Third Reich.

On 20 May, 1940, Kent's flat was raided and he was arrested; and the *Red Book*'s fastening was forced open. U.S. Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, himself a Nazi sympathizer in the 1930s, was brought to the apartment to observe British Intelligence break open the book's lock and catalogue its contents, he personally waived Kent's right to diplomatic immunity. Kent and Wolkoff were imprisoned for seven and ten years respectively. Ramsay was interned under the act in May 1940 and joined other right-wing extremists such as Oswald Mosley and Admiral Nikolai Wolkoff in Brixton Prison. Released after the war Ramsay regained his seat and died on 11March, 1955.

The book became the property of the Home Office via the courts, its contents unknown to all but a few until July of 1941 when Geoffrey Mander, the Liberal MP and industrialist, asked the Home Secretary whether he would publish the book's list of members and if those mentioned were under surveillance, Herbert Morrison refused, saying,

> I do not think it would be in the public interest to publish the names of the members of this organisation, or to state which steps have been taken from the point of view of national security. Appropriate steps are taken to watch all kinds of people about whom there may be grounds for suspicion. About many members of the Right Club there are no grounds for suspicion, and about many people who were not members of the Right Club there are grounds of suspicion. To publish the names of people who are being watched would be most unwise: to publish the names of people who are not being watched would be unfair. Secrecy is the essence of any system of supervision.
>
> *Mr Mander,* In view of the fact that it has been stated that a number of distinguished persons, including Members of this House, belong to this rather remarkable organisation, does not the right hon. Gentleman think it would be in the public interest for everyone to know who belongs to it?
>
> *Mr Morrison*, I think it would be very interesting, but there is much interesting information in the Home Office which we really must keep to ourselves.
>
> *Mr Shinwell,* As regards the allegation that several hon. Members belong to this questionable organisation, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that this is not so, or, if they have belonged to it, that they have resigned?
>
> *Mr Morrison,* No, Sir.
>
> *Mr Shinwell*, Does that mean that my right hon. friend does not wish to give such an assurance or that there are no hon. Members belonging to this organisation?
>
> *Mr Morrison,* It does not mean either of those things. It means that I do not propose to give any indication of what names there are, or are not, on this list.

Viscountess Astor, 'What is the difference between the Right and the Left?

The question was raised again a couple of years later during a debate in the Commons on 12 October 1944

> *Tom Driberg,* asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now publish the complete list of members of the Right Club, the activities of which were the subject of police enquiries.
>
> *Herbert Morrison,* No sir. For reasons which I have explained on a previous occasion I do not think that it would be fair or in the public interest to publish this list, but I can give an assurance that appropriate steps are taken to watch any individual against whom there are grounds of suspicion.
>
> *Tom Driberg,* Is the right honourable Gentleman aware that this club existed for the specific purpose of spreading anti-Semitism; and, in view of the fact that anti-Semitism is one of the classic weapons of Nazism and Fascism, is it not time to let the light of day in on the proceedings and personnel of this very shady secret society?
>
> *Herbert Morrison,* I still think that it would be unfair to publish the list. It is a list which has been compiled by a private individual. It may be correct, or it may not. There may be people who went on that list, with or without the opinions to which the honourable Member referred, and to publish lists of this character would, I think, be an improper use of the information which comes to the Home Office in all sorts of ways, and from all sorts of directions.
>
> *Emanuel Shinwell,* If there should be any truth - I am not suggesting that there is - in the allegation that some honourable Members of the House, past and present, were members of this club and were supporters of its subversive activities, is it not desirable in the public interest and in the interest of members as a whole, that the list should be published?
>
> *D. N. Pritt,* He (Archibald Ramsay) has now disclosed that one of the reasons why he was interned was his connection with the Right Club and has described it as having close connection with the Conservative Party and having Conservative members. Is it not fair to the Conservative Party to publish, not an inaccurate, but an accurate list of those persons known to the Home Secretary to be members of the Right Club.
>
> *Herbert Morrison*, What the honourable and gallant Gentleman says is one thing, but I cannot agree that that should bind me. One of these days I might be asked in this House if I will publish a list, for example, of secret members of the Communist Party. I am not sure that my honourable and learned Friend would say that it was right for me to publish it.

There the matter seemed to end, whatever trepidation Mavis may have felt about having her membership exposed must remain a matter for speculation. The list remained secret long after her death and she never had the opportunity to account for her name being included in it. The book became an object of legend and rumour before turning up in a solicitor's office in the 1980s, but still the matter would not rest and in March 1994 the Secretary of State was asked if would will state the present whereabouts of the *Black Book* (sic) of Captain Ramsay, and if

he will make it available for public inspection and publication. He was told that a check of departmental records has revealed reference to a ledger known as the *Red Book*, which lists membership of the Right Club. The ledger is currently under lock and key at the Wiener Museum in London.

Anti-Semitism grew in the period leading up to the war as many were led to believe that Jewish interests were forcing Britain into the conflict to defend their fellow Jews in Germany. The inclusion of Mavis's name in the book is hard to account for. There is no indication in any of her known actions or affiliations of anti-Semitism or support for fascism however, best friend Lady Astor was certainly anti-Jewish, but her name does not appear here nor do any other members of the Tate or Hogg families.

14. Darkening Skies 1939

1939 began with a meeting of the Conservative Association at Weymouth Hall, Frome, to discuss recent European events, which Mavis attended after recovering from her recent illness. In her speech she paid tribute to Neville Chamberlain saying that she did not believe that the Nazi regime in Germany was as wholeheartedly behind Herr Hitler as it was before the Munich agreement and went on to say that she did not believe that there was any complete understanding, love and unity of interest between Italy and Germany.

On 27 January Sir Samuel Hoare's Criminal Justice Bill proposed the abolition of flogging and birching in prisons, heartily supported by Lady Oxford who mentioned Mrs Tate as a JP who was in favour of its retention despite her usually progressive views. In a later debate she declared that she believed that, 'a short sharp whipping, if it can follow sufficiently quickly on the offence, is the best type of punishment for some children and a great deal better than talking to them. To some children talking makes them very conscious of their own importance and is no deterrent. At the risk of being called brutal, reactionary, and sadistic or anything else, nothing will induce me to vote for the abolition of corporal punishment unless it is proved that it is not a deterrent and that so far has not been proved. Some types of criminal understand only one thing and that is physical pain to themselves.'

An article in *The People* newspaper towards the end of the month announced that during the previous summer Mrs Tate along with Dr Edith Summerskill and Miss J Frances had formed the Married Woman's Association with the object of raising the status of the housewife. The 'Wages for Housewives' movement as it became known was determined to allow married women to keep their own money. They gave an example a wife who is allowed £3 out of her husband's £4 wage to pay the household bills. By being careful she manages to save a small amount of this each week but when her husband finds out he is perfectly entitled to ask for it back. A bill under the National Health Insurance Scheme was expected to debate this topic later in the year.

Grabbing the headlines in the *Daily Mirror* in February Mavis stated that, 'On every occasion when there is a crisis the first thing we hear is that there is a panic on the stock exchange, although the spirit of the country is one of calm. The influence of women members of the stock exchange would be such that there would be much less panic. This was in support of an

amendment to the Prevention of Fraud Bill which would ensure that no stock exchange be recognised by the government until membership is controlled by the Board of Trade. The amendment was defeated. Women, of course, were not able to become stockbrokers at the time. At an address in Birmingham, in early March, Mavis brought up the vexing question of foreign servants. She observed that many large houses in the West of England which would be used for billeting were staffed by foreign servants because English servants were not available. In the event of war they would not be able to remain, and the problem of domestic labour which would be necessary to ensure proper attention to the children, would therefore become acute. With the international situation on everybody's mind, Mavis gave some advice at a local meeting, … 'we must be prepared to defend ourselves. As a nation we must arm and as individuals we must offer our services wherever they may be of most use but do not let us give up hope and give way to gloom and senseless economy. Enjoy all you are able. Spend all you can afford. It is too stupid to ruin the present and create want that misery now because of something which may never happen'.

During 1938 the Ministry of Health had laid plans to evacuate children from areas that it thought particularly vulnerable to bombing should war break out, dividing the country into zones with the aim of moving children from the cities to the countryside and in the end over 3 million people were temporarily rehoused. Mavis was of course concerned about the effects on her area of responsibility and made her point in the House on 2 March 1939.

> In the West Country people have been going around making exhaustive surveys of the houses, the numbers of rooms and the number of children who could be taken. In villages such as Peasedown and Mells, which can be regarded as fairly safe from air attack, and maybe valuable centres for children, the water shortage was so acute last year that the children already living there had to be taken away in order to be washed, and there was an inadequate supply of drinking water. in Somerset there are many villages which have felt for a long time that the water supply question has been disgracefully neglected. whether arrangements have been made as to who is to do the housework, the cooking and the washing for these children, because a great many houses are, of necessity, staffed by foreign labour at the present time, British labour not being available. Will that foreign labour be there in the event of war? Will even the British labour which is there at present be there in the event of war? Will not some of those who are at present engaged in domestic labour be volunteering for some other form of National Service which will be quite as valuable? We should make quite certain that there will be an adequate number of people to undertake those essential services. We are recruiting a Women's Land Army, and I am certain that it would be easy to recruit a household army, or whatever it might be called, for this purpose.

Early March saw an unusual debate on whether the publication of advertisements containing offers by those outside of the medical profession to treat anyone for cancer, principally spiritualists and faith healers should be allowed. Dr Edith Summerskill was in favour of the ban as a medical professional fearing that it would open the door to all kinds of quackery but Lady Astor and Mavis Tate opposed the ban arguing that cancer is one of the diseases about which the profession has a lot to learn and that faith could be of some value in treatment. The ban was allowed to stand which, 'elicited from Mavis the cry, 'Three cheers for the medical trade union!'

Still unable to leave the question of pasteurisation, she asked the Minister of Health whether he will appoint a Royal Commission under a chairman of judicial experience to investigate the whole question of the treatment of milk in the light both of foreign experience and the statistical material now available and to hear evidence from all sides? To which the minister replied, 'I do not think that the appointment of a Royal Commission on this subject would serve a useful purpose'. Nonetheless Lady Astor continued to lead the debate, - 'safer milk is essential if people are to drink more milk. The ideal thing would be to have safe raw milk, but probably we shall not be able to get that in our lifetime. We have to make up our minds also to have pasteurised milk'. Mavis disagreed,

> The Noble Lady has stressed the importance, in the interests of health, of the pasteurisation of milk. I am very anxious to see more milk drunk by our children, but I do not want any of it pasteurised. I know that the Noble Lady advocates the pasteurisation of milk because of tremendous anxiety concerning the incidence and the suffering caused by bovine tuberculosis. I hope we shall not begin to combat that scourge at the wrong end by pasteurising milk. Milk is a vital food and contains vitamins and hormones. No one knows how many of these are destroyed by pasteurising. We want milk free from germs produced by herds which are free from disease, and we are less likely to achieve that if we think we can do away with all the germs by simply boiling the milk. Certain experiments have been carried out lately on rats to try and prove that pasteurised milk has no ultimate effect on their breeding capacity. These experiments are of no value whatever, for the reason that pasteurised or unpasteurised milk cannot be given to a rat until it is four weeks old. Rats are fed on their mother's milk for four weeks and therefore, in their childhood they are having unpasteurised milk which entirely nullifies the value of any experiment upon them from a scientific point of view.

On March 15 Germany invaded Prague and two days later on the 17th Mavis addressed the Conservative Club social evening in Frome,

> We have got to realise that Herr Hitler does not wish to pursue the paths of peace and does not wish to settle the difficulties of the world by consultation over the table. I'm very much afraid that his intentions can give us a little doubt that his ultimate aim is domination of the world by force. We live in days of unparalleled gravity. I was in the constituency last week and I was far from pessimistic. I really believed that the clouds are lifting. Today those hopes are falling to the ground. I never had the smallest faith in the word of Herr Hitler. This evening some of you may have listened to the Prime Minister, it is important to realise that is useless to have been praising his work a week ago and condemning it today. What he did at Munich is not responsible for what happened today. In September there were three courses open to the country, to intervene, to stand completely aside, or to induce the nations to pursue the paths of peace. Mr Chamberlain took the latter course and had the majority of the country behind him'. Don't blame the man who leads the country, it is our duty to back him, his attempts to achieve peace were tremendous and we should be grateful to him for preserving the peace five months longer than it would have been without his efforts.

Mavis Tate's forthright views often caused controversy, but remarks made in the House repeating her claim from 1931 that 80% of British women cannot cook led the women of Frome to rise up against the insult and challenge her to a cooking competition. 'The women of Frome

won't stand for the insult and aim to tell her so next time she visits the town' proclaimed one. Unrepentant she stood by her views claiming that, 'I'm a good cook and my hobby is collecting recipes it seems that English women as a whole have no imagination and that they are lazy and ignorant when it comes to preparing food. In some houses they can't even brew tea decently let alone coffee'.

March also saw the spread of the annual flu epidemic causing Mavis to take to her bed with what was described as a 'severe attack' from 23 March causing some confusion as to where her loyalties lay. She had supported a motion calling for a national government as outlined by Viscount Halifax and supported by Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden but it seems that she had misread the situation causing the Frome Central Office to issue statement on 1 April, 'Mrs Tate was very much surprised to find on reading her papers next day that the resolution had been taken as a criticism of Mr Chamberlain. Mrs Tate is a loyal supporter of Mr Chamberlain and of the government. She has not joined any anti-Chamberlain group and put her name to the resolution merely because it was an expression of opinion which embodied her views'.

Back in the House during a debate on the Criminal Justice Bill, she agreed with the taking of fingerprints and photographs providing that they are destroyed if the charge is dismissed. In mid-April at a meeting of the Chew Magna branch of the Junior Imperial League, she returned to the subject of Germany,

> In my opinion Germany's ultimate ambition is world conquest and domination. Most people, before the Munich agreement had sympathised with Germany, and said that she had a right as a nation to expand and take under her control German speaking people who wanted German government. Today Germany wants her colonies not for raw materials or people, but for one thing, world conquest, which is the ultimate aim and ambition of the German nation. They are not faced with the question of letting Germany have territory but with the forming of aeroplane and submarine bases in that territory. In Czechoslovakia Germany obtained a tremendous strategic position in Europe as well as up-to-date war machines, raw materials, minerals, and food. But if there had been no Munich agreement she would have fought for that country and would probably have gained it. Should we be forced to go to war it is of great importance that we have behind us the sympathies and cooperation of our whole empire. We could not have counted upon having their support at the time of the Munich agreement. Today we have their sympathies and not only theirs but also those of the American people. I am certain that had Germany prove to the world that she wanted peace and had joined the Disarmament Conference she would in time have had all her colonies returned to her. But we realise today that she does not only want her colonies but the wealth of Ukraine and eventually world dominance. She has been incredibly clever in the way she has welded Italy and Japan to her side.
>
> I think that an agreement between this country and Russia will do a great deal in securing world peace. Some people say that we cannot join hands with communists, undoubtedly, Communism, Nazism and Fascism amount to the same, namely the sacrifice of the individual for the state, but I think an alliance with Russia is essential.

At a meeting in Bristol, she gave a speech in favour of compulsory national service and conscription but pointed out that, ‘a general election on the issue of compulsory service would be disastrous. It would raise bitter antagonisms and dictators would point out the weakness in democracy. Those weaknesses might be deplorable, but they are infinitely better than the

hideous coercion of totalitarian government.' Mavis was also of the view that conscientious objectors should be registered and liable to be called up for six months service in a separate civilian corps to be created for the purpose and to further work of social importance which would not otherwise be undertaken by municipal or private enterprise. This was to be undertaken with pay and allowances comparable to those called up for military training to avoid them being allowed to continue in the old jobs at full pay which would make conscientious objection very desirable.

Matters continued to deteriorate on the home front. At a meeting on 14 April Mavis stated that for financial reasons she would not be able to contest the next election and that her decision was final, the party secretary was instructed to send an official statement to the press immediately.

However, the following afternoon Dr Fox, the society's chairman and treasurer, received a phone call from a friend of Mrs Tate urging him not to make the decision public as there was every hope of arranging something in the near future to enable her to continue. Unfortunately, the matter leaked out which made it necessary for her to make an announcement that she was giving the matter further consideration for one month in the hope that her financial position might improve sufficiently for her to carry on and agreed to give her final decision by 31 May.

She explained her position further. 'The expenses of a large country constituency are inevitably very great quite apart from elections. My financial position has altered recently, and I was afraid that it might not be possible for me to fight the election, but the Frome Conservative Association have been so generous and so active in raising money that the matter is now under consideration for another month. My subscription to the Association used to be £400 but last year they reduced it to £200. I hope to be able to fight on, but in the event of my having to give up my connection with the Frome Conservative Association there would be no question of standing for any other constituency. I have been very happy representing the people of Somerset and they have been very kind and generous to me.' Mavis told one interviewer that she had to pay £1,200 in election expenses to get the seat, and in addition she had agreed to hand over the whole of her salary as an MP to the local Conservative Association. She added, 'I keep a house in the district which with donations to charity and other expenses costs another £500 per year. In addition, my expenses are higher than most places because Frome is such a large constituency– if I am unable to continue in Frome, I shall go out of political life'. Her dire financial situation was almost certainly due to her separation and pending divorce from Henry Tate. Despite her illustrious background she never seemed to have any real money of her own.

At the meeting on the 1st of June, she stated that her financial position had improved to some extent and that she was anxious to fight the next election, but she could not see her way to pay the annual contribution to the funds of the Association. She hoped to be able to contribute at least £400 towards her expenses at the next election meaning that the Association would be obliged to raise the balance for her of about £800. Dr Fox proposed a resolution that the executive recommend Mrs Tate for adoption as the prospective candidate for the following election. A vote was taken by ballot which resulted in 10 for the resolution and 4 against. When Mavis was informed of the result, she stated that as the committee was not unanimous in wishing to retain her she must ask them to look for a new candidate. In a letter dated 15 June she stated that,

> …to contest the Frome Division at the next election would have been extremely difficult for me for financial reasons and my friends will, I know, all sympathise with me when I tell them that I am unable to reconsider the decision I came to after the executive meeting of June 1. They will, I know congratulate me on having found work to do. I am fortunate in having been chosen by Miss Kerr-Sander to associate myself with her in the running of her secretarial college. I shall join her after the next election.
>
> I was proud and very happy to represent Frome, and I should leave it and the House of Commons after the general election with almost indescribable regret. If any at your meeting feel I have failed to serve the division adequately, will they join me in doing everything possible to assist the new candidate. If we all work together inspired by of spirit of service for our country Frome will still be retained by Conservatives in support of the government at the next election. I hope to have many have you meetings with you or before that time comes.

Dr Fox thanked Mrs Tate for all she had done and expressed great regret that she had decided not to stand again. The news was described as a 'bombshell' and made headlines in the press expressing the view that, 'this decision will be regretted throughout the division and by all Conservatives throughout the country for no party could wish for a more energetic and popular representative'.

With the 1940 election some months away Mavis was still the working MP for Frome and was back on form in the House on 27 June. During a debate on the increase in the excise duties on mechanically propelled vehicles, she asked that the increase not apply to maternity or district nurses for the purposes of their work,

> I very much deplore the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not in his place and that I am left in the inexperienced hands of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He has not yet learned that the right way to treat women is sometimes to give them something. It is no good his laughing in that hearty and scornful manner. He has obviously done nothing up to to-day but run away. I am hoping that he is now going to do a little something to redeem his record in regard to women by granting this very small concession. I beg of the Financial Secretary to remember the extreme difficulty of a nurse's life. I know I shall be told that she can put the expenses of her car to a reduction of Income Tax. There are a great many nurses who do not even have the opportunity of paying Income Tax, and there is not a nurse in the country that is ever paid at a rate which bears any relation to the services she renders. I know that it has, unfortunately, been the policy of the Government to have unequal pay as between men and women. I deplore that policy, but here is a small opportunity for the Government to show that they are not entirely without a sense of justice or right. I do not wish to keep the Committee, as I realise that we have a great deal of work before us, and my case is so strong that it should not need pleading. I, therefore, leave it in the unsympathetic hands of the Financial Secretary.

Returning to the proposed evacuation of children to the countryside Mavis asked the question, 'Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that every summer there is an acute shortage of water in the villages of Peasedown and Mells, that I am informed that no fewer than 200 children are proposed to be evacuated to Mells, and before he allows a single child to be evacuated to these villages, will he make sure that there is an adequate supply of water, or is he just going to trust to the Germans to bring it with them? She sent a letter to the *Daily Mirror* putting the case for equal pay for both sexes of Air Raid Precaution workers suggesting that

they push their claim for justice on the local authorities that were responsible for their services. Later, a deputation made up of a number of women's organisations pressed the Lord Privy Seal to institute equal pay, claiming that a woman and her services are assessed at 2/3 the value of a man but their request was refused.

The *Citizen* newspaper contained an article on the 12 women MPs during the 20 years since they had first entered the house commentating mainly on their physical appearance and dress sense reported that, 'Mrs Tate, who has been called the Madonna because of her pale stately features combines an intimate knowledge of such dissimilar subjects as flying, child welfare and a domestic science. She is in favour of capital punishment.'

By mid-July the Frome Conservative Committee had decided that Captain Guy Fanshawe RN (retired) would be a suitable replacement for Mrs Tate; an experienced seaman, he was 56 years old, and the son of the late Admiral of the Fleet. He had seen service in the Boxer Rebellion in China, served throughout the whole of the 1914-18 war and retired from the Navy in 1923. he had previously been MP for West Stirlingshire.

1939 saw the publication of the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Abortion* by a committee run between the Home Office and the Ministry of Health under the chairmanship of Norman Birkett. The membership included a range of individuals from medical professionals to women's suffrage supporters and after a mass gathering of evidence and 47 committee meetings the report recommended therapeutic termination if pregnancy would endanger life and health. The committee's conclusions did not present the radical revision of the law that many campaigners had hoped for and the outbreak of war was to prevent the report's conclusions being investigated in detail. Nevertheless, the committee had presented an important opportunity for activists and affected women to put their views across. One of the key arguments for campaigners was the provision of better sex education, with cheaper and more accessible contraceptives and better advice at municipal clinics. The existing restrictive abortion laws did little to deter many women who found themselves with unwanted pregnancies and because it drove abortion underground, women's lives were often endangered. During July the Abortion Law Reform Association held a conference to discuss the report at which Mavis, made the bold statement, 'I know something about abortion from my own personal experience. I have never brought a live child into the world, and it would be death for me to have one'. On a later occasion she says that she 'was told 14 years ago by three doctors that as long as I lived, I could never hope to be on my feet for more than an hour a day'. This takes us back to 1925 the year of her divorce from Gott, who had left sometime before, and marriage to Tate. Something tragic happened to her physical well-being during that year but unfortunately, we have no further information.

The conference attacked the findings of the Birkett Report with Mavis saying that it was founded on ignorance of the true position as it is often possible for a well to do woman whose health will be endangered by childbearing to have a pregnancy legally terminated if she can afford the fees from 80 to 100 guineas. The same facilities are not available to a poor woman in the identical condition of health. Dr Stella Churchill described the report as written by a committee whose views on morality, which they were not asked to express, were 50 years behind the times. In the end the conference passed the following motion,

This conference believes that the recommendations of the Birkett report are completely inadequate and [believes that] the irreducible minimum of maternal mortality will not be achieved until birth-control advice is made generally available and all skilled medically induced abortion is made legal.

On 21 July the business of the House moved onto the employment of juveniles for long hours in poor conditions particularly in the cotton industry,

I believe that every speaker, with the exception of one, has agreed as to the undesirability of working juveniles for 48 hours a week. I would like to deal with the argument, which was that it was in the interests of the cotton industry that these juveniles should be employed for the longer hours. No one who cares for the employment of our people can be disinterested in the welfare of the cotton trade, but I feel that, if the welfare of a trade depends upon the over-working of young children, then, the sooner it is wound up the better. I do not believe it is true to say that the cotton trade is dependent upon these few children working for these extra hours. As the noble Lady the Member for the Sutton Division of Plymouth (Viscountess Astor) said, it is the old argument which has been heard on every occasion when any effort has been made to ameliorate conditions or to progress. When we passed the Factories Act, which we did with pride and with pleasure, and on which we congratulated the Government, most of us truly believed that in future where it would be the rarest possible thing for a child of 16 to work more than 44 hours per week, but if these regulations are passed, I am afraid that it will no longer be a rare thing, and vast numbers of children will have to work the 48 hours.

With regard to the argument as to whether or not it is bad for the children's health, what two doctors said in regard to their physical health leaves me absolutely cold. Upon what do they judge health? Surely, it is rather reactionary to judge the health of a child on the health of the body alone. Have we not learned that true health is health of mind as well as body, and can a child have a healthy mind who has to go to work for 48 hours a week and has no time for recreation and for the extension of its education? In every industry where there has been facility and encouragement of after-care and after-education, the industry itself has developed.

I beg the Government to reconsider these regulations. I shall vote for a reduction of the Minister's salary. I realise that we are going through difficult times, but this is the wrong way in which to economise, and the wrong way in which to save an industry. One hon. Member spoke of the excellent central schools. It is a farce to spend large sums of money on better education if the whole of that education is to be wasted by children going into industry at too early an age and working too long hours. Part of the education we give to-day is of an unpractical nature. In many instances we are spending so much money on building central schools which in some cases we are not able to afford. I speak particularly of Frome, when we could very well have utilised the admirable schools in the villages, which would have been infinitely better for the health of the children and for the purses of the ratepayers. Let us have a more practicable idea of the way to spend our money. Do not let hon. Members come to this House and say that the welfare of the cotton industry is depending upon overworking our young people. That is a pitiable suggestion. The Government who have so admirable a record in what they have done for the health of the nation and the welfare of the young people, ought not to undo that good.

At the beginning of August with a general election expected to take place towards the second half of October Captain Guy Fanshawe opened the Brislington Fete as the prospective National

Conservative candidate for Frome with Mavis in attendance as the outgoing MP. She voiced regret at leaving her many friends in the district and expressed her support for Captain Fanshawe as her replacement. Fanshawe did the rounds of local conservative groups getting himself known and defending the National Government's record and the leadership of Chamberlain while expressing great concern at the international situation and the growing threat from Germany.

15. Britain at War: 1 September 1939

Despite all the planning, campaigning and good will, history had other ideas. Within hours of the declaration of war Captain Fanshawe was called up by the Admiralty to his emergency station, his parliamentary campaign over. Meanwhile war of a different kind was continuing. On 12 September the following notice appeared in the Personal Column of *The Times* :

TO ALL WHO IT MAY CONCERN – I, Henry Burton Tate of 39 Cadogan Square SW1 hereby give notice that I will NOT be RESPONSIBLE for any DEBTS or LIABILITIES incurred or to be incurred by my wife MAVIS CONSTANCE TATE MP (MRS HB TATE) and daughter JULIA ELIZABETH MARY TATE both residing at 2, Lower Sloane Street SW1 and that they have no authority to pledge my credit. Dated this 9 September 1939. Henry Burton Tate.

The following day Mavis replied in a letter to the press that she 'wished it to be known that she had not incurred and never had any intention of incurring liabilities which justified the issue of such a notice and nor would her stepdaughter who was now a volunteer in the Woman's Auxiliary Transport Service and would be 21 in May. On the 29th she issued two writs against her husband concerning maintenance and allowances to his daughter Julia. As a joint trustee under the terms of the deed of separation, Lord Hailsham was joint plaintiff in the case which having been made was adjourned.

On National Register Day 29 September 1939, the various parties were housed as follows,

Tate, Mavis C married Member of Parliament
2, Lower Sloane Street Chelsea occupied by four people.
Mitchell, Winifred. Born 1900 secretary
Gray, Elsie M. born 1904 parlour maid
Gray, Hector W born 1899 chef

Tate, Henry B married of Independent means
39, Cadogan Square with a cook, parlour maid, housemaid, between maid, ladysmaid, chauffer, and a woman carrying out 'unpaid domestic duties'.

Tate, Julia Elizabeth Mary was at the Stanway House, secretarial college Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

Julia had attended St Leonards school at St Andrews in Fife before becoming a student at the Kerr- Sanders Secretarial College which Mavis was due to join when she stood down at the expected election. The college had recently moved from London to Stanway House a Jacobean mansion in Cheltenham along with 73 other girls to avoid the anticipated German bombing. The students lived two to a room and the full course took ten months. - presumably she had been moved from the Women's Land Army to Gloucestershire during this brief period. Little is known about Julia's life, but it is believed that she married and moved to France dying in 1995 at the age of 76.

As the parties awaited their day in court the life of a busy MP continued much as before. In mid-September she took part in a debate on war pensions and allowances claiming that a recent Royal Warrant would make it more difficult for a man to prove in future that his injuries were attributable to war service and that fees or expenses would have grave consequences for him in his own home once the war had ended given the increasing expense of drugs and bandages. During the same debate she expressed her views on payments to unmarried dependants,

> The hon. Member who opened the Debate for the Opposition said he was glad that the Government were giving allowances to those whom he described as 'unmarried mothers'. I hope the House will believe me when I say that I am in no way seeking to judge the unmarried mother. God forbid that I should set myself up to judge any man or any woman, but I do say that if you think you are doing a service to the young men and the young women of the country in this way, it is a grave mistake. If a man just over 20—which is very young—has been keeping a woman to whom he is not married, for some six months before enlistment, and if you allow her to draw the same allowance as a wife, then I do not think you are helping either the man or the girl.
>
> I am not just setting up myself as a moralist. I am not looking at it only from that point of view. We have, however, certain laws and certain moral standards. If the Government wish to subsidise concubines and bastards let them say so, but I wonder whether they really feel confident that the taxpayer is behind them. It is no good the Minister saying that they were doing it because of the experience in the last war. There are hundreds of cases where the most admirable women are living with men to whom they have been far better than many wives for a great number of years and whose children they have borne. That is a different case, but one cannot put that forward in the case of a youth a little over 20 and a girl who has been living with him for six months.

There was a flicker of excitement on the Frome election scene when Charles Henry Wallace Hewitt, aged 42 a quarry owner of Cranleigh Gardens, Stoke Bishop, Bristol appeared in court charged that, 'On September 25th for a purpose prejudicial to the public safety and defence of the realm, he was in the vicinity of a protected place.' Hewitt was to stand for the general election in Frome but was also a member of the British Union of Fascists and a Britain-Germany friendship organisation called The Link. He was found in possession of a large number of leaflets and some documents and caught taking some photographs of, 'an assemblage

of his Majesties Forces'. He claims that he was just a keen photographer and in the end was fined £10.

In 1940 the government launched a series of savings events known as 'Salute the Soldier Weeks' with the aim of army equipment being sponsored by the civil community. Each county was set a target of an amount of money to be raised and on 11 April the opening ceremony of the Keynsham campaign was held at the cinema with speeches by Mrs Tate and others, £14,000 was raised on the first day against a target of £40,000 for the week. A short time later she performed ~~for~~ the same service at Batheaston with a big public procession in which many local services took part. In early June she opened proceedings at Weston's 'Salute Week'. During this period the Equal Pay Campaign Committee ~~still~~ under ~~the~~ her chairmanship was summoning its forces with the approach of a debate in Parliament. The committee's view of the commonly heard argument that men should be paid at a higher rate because they have families to support, was that to be logical, this argument should involve different of rates of pay to men according to the number of their dependents and is best dealt with by income tax relief or child allowance.

Her remarkable triumph in rescuing Frau Seger appeared in the *Daily Mirror* and other papers when she claimed that, 'I understand the psychology of the German people I'm the only person in this country has been able to get to people out of a German concentration camp. I did it without an introduction from this country, by meeting and bamboozling someone in close contact with Herr Hitler into believing that it would be good propaganda for Germany. I made the Germans pay for us to come back home in a Junker aeroplane and to send Prince von Bismarck to meet us at Croydon'.

An article in the *Somerset Standard* on 24 November reported that Mavis received an urgent call to return to London on business and she was driven to Bristol to catch the train. 'Mrs Tate was a very busy person. She was doing an enormous amount in the capital not only for the Frome Division but also for the Bath Division. It was announced at this meeting that Mavis had taken over the Parliamentary duties of Loel Guinness, MP for that the city since 1931 and who was now serving as a squadron leader in the RAF in France. Although only 33 he too had announced his intention to retire at the next election to pay more attention to his business affairs and like Mavis as he was a private pilot. Mavis represented a considerable number of Frome firms and was privately representing them in getting government contracts probably organising her business affairs in anticipation of no longer being an MP and of course without the support of her husband. The grocery trade in particular attracted her and had many difficulties which she was helping with and she was probably called to London to help somebody in business and as a result she was unable to present the prizes at the Brislington Conservative Club and the chairman Dr Fox stood in for her. Addressing the club he said that he had spoken to her last night and she was convinced that Mr Chamberlain was the right man for the job. There would not now be a general election until the end of the war and with the prospective Frome candidate Captain Fanshawe and Bath MP Loel Guinness called away to fight, she had little chance of retiring to her secretarial company and her already huge workload must have more than doubled.

Back in the House in November the Secretary of State for Air was asked whether the circular regarding the voluntary nature of vaccination for soldiers circulated to all commands on 18th September was sent to Royal Air Force squadrons? Which prompted Mrs Tate to ask, 'Will the right hon. Gentleman also inform the troops that government lymph is produced partly from

rabbits, and is very likely, therefore, to spread encephalitis, and is exceedingly dangerous to use?' No reply was recorded.

Meanwhile, the case of Tate v Tate reached the King's Bench Division on 18 December. The plaintiffs, Mavis Tate and Lord Hailsham as trustees of a deed of covenant were to bring a case against Henry Tate for six months arrears of maintenance totalling £208 but a settlement with Tate paying the full amount plus costs was reached before proceedings got underway prompting a remark from Mr Justice Charles that, 'it looks as if at one time the tempers were rather exacerbated (referring to Henry Tate's note in *The Times* re his wife and daughters credit), it is very satisfying that the parties have had the good sense to settle this matter instead of going on with all the publicity and acerbation of temper once more.'

Mavis's appearances in the Commons during the first few weeks of the new decade involved fairly mundane matters concerning the auxiliary fire service, ploughing, agriculture and her renewed opposition to 'unmarried wives' being paid allowances ahead of the former spouse. During the sittings between November 1938 to November 1939 there were 308 divisions, those attending more than 100 were Mavis at 143, and Loel Guinness at 120, she spoke 33 columns of text and asked 44 oral questions. She expressed her annoyance at members of the War Cabinet not turning up for debates such as the one on the situation of agriculture after the war. Cottage accommodation should be provided now, she believed so that young people who wish to settle on the land could have facilities for doing so. There was a deplorable shortage of timber much of which had been unwisely used for hut construction when other materials could have been better utilised and she asked the minister if it was possible to give a subsidy for 'grubbing up' orchards which were on good soil but producing third rate fruit, the land could then be used for the cultivation of crops and vegetables.

In mid-February Mavis submitted an amendment to the Agricultural Bill to secure a subsidy of £2 per acre for ploughing up land that had been under grass for five years instead of seven as in the bill, the aim was to get more land under cultivation for food as the younger grassland was of better quality. In this she was opposed to by the Secretary of State for Scotland who argued that a difficult position would be created among farmers by making changes during the wrong season – also younger pastures were still in good form and condition. Mrs Tate's amendment was supported by socialists and liberals. She thought she had won her case and upon returning from the lobby she banged her fists together in her excitement and awaited the figures impatiently which were read out amid cries of Oh! and Shame! as her amendment was defeated by 182 votes to 149 with a number of Conservatives abstaining.

At a meeting of the Conservative Association in March they passed a unanimous resolution, 'Recognising the great interest Mrs Tate has taken on behalf of the members of the Frome Division and her untiring efforts towards better conditions in the agricultural industry, earnestly trust that Mrs Tate can be prevailed upon to continue to represent us in the House of Commons'. She replied, 'I think you know that I never really wanted to give up Parliament, but there were circumstances really beyond my control and financial matters made it very difficult. Quite frankly, I should very much like to remain attempting to be your representative, but it is a matter for the Frome Conservative Association. It is not a matter that lies in my hands'.

Days later it was reported that Mavis was suffering from a strained heart and would have to rest completely for two months. Some reports suggest that she had 'suffered a breakdown through overwork, attending every sitting of Parliament and answering 50 letters a day as well as acting as an JP and looking after the Bath constituency. There is no record of her taking part

in Commons debates between19 March when she spoke on vaccination and 29 May when she made a very brief statement on Local Defense Volunteers. Her local party, meanwhile, issued a statement to say that that there had been many representations with a view to retaining Mrs Tate both official and otherwise but due to her present serious illness it could not give its formal consideration until she had recovered - and then of course there was Captain Fanshawe a previous contender to consider.

The Conduct of the War Debate 7-9 May 1940

On 15 March 1939, German tanks rolled into Prague in open defiance of the Munich Agreement. This brazen act of aggression shocked the British establishment and discredited the policy of appeasement championed by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Even long-standing proponents of peace, including influential figures such as the Astors, were forced to reconsider their stance. Many now rallied behind Winston Churchill, whose warnings about Hitler's ambitions had previously been dismissed as alarmist. Public sentiment, too, began to shift. The national press, which had once praised Chamberlain for securing 'peace for our time,' now recognized that Hitler could not be trusted. A growing sense of inevitability surrounded the prospect of war.

In early 1940, Germany intensified its campaign of conquest by invading Norway, a neutral nation. The strategic objective was clear: seize the port of Narvik, vital for the import of Swedish iron ore essential to German armament production. Though Allied forces mounted a response, the operation was poorly coordinated and ultimately failed. Norway fell under German control—a decisive victory that not only bolstered Hitler's military position but also dealt a significant blow to Allied morale.

Back in Britain, the defeat triggered fierce criticism of Chamberlain's wartime leadership. Many questioned the government's competence, and frustration boiled over in the House of Commons. On 7 May, a critical debate began that would last two days and culminate in a vote of no confidence. Though Chamberlain technically survived the vote, his majority had been slashed from over 200 to 81 and amongst the West Country rebels were previous enthusiastic supporters, Viscountess Astor and Mavis Tate. The narrow margin laid bare the depth of dissatisfaction, both within Parliament and the country at large. It became increasingly clear that new, more dynamic leadership was needed if Britain was to confront the existential threat posed by Nazi Germany.

By 9 May, rebellion within the Conservative Party had become open and coordinated. It coalesced around three central criticisms: Chamberlain's failure to inspire national confidence; the mishandling of the Norwegian campaign, which had exposed grave deficiencies in military planning; and the belief that a coalition government, led by someone with the trust of both Parliament and the people, was essential to national survival. These pressures would culminate the following day, when Chamberlain, recognizing that his position had become untenable, tendered his resignation and recommended Churchill as his successor. Britain now braced itself for the long struggle ahead, under new and resolute leadership.

Those in favour of Chamberlain continuing included Loel Guinness, and Major Victor Cazalet. The Astors supported the war against Germany when it came although they were uncomfortable with Joseph Stalin as an ally (from 1941). Furious with those who doubted the family's patriotism and attacks on what was being described as the 'Cliveden Set'. Lord Astor set forth their position in the *Times*,

> For years my wife and I have entertained in the country members of all parties (including communists) members of all faiths, of all countries and of all interests. To link our weekends

with any particular clique is as absurd as is the allegation that those of us who desire to establish better relations with Germany and Italy are pro Nazis or pro fascist.

As we have seen Mavis appears to have been absent from the House for most of March until May and so did not speak on the subject, it can only be assumed that this was due to continuing ill-health rather than lack of enthusiasm, but she did manage to cast her vote. Opposition to the government was small in comparison with the volume of support and it would have been possible for Chamberlain to have carried on his previous course in the fairly safe assumption that he could command a working majority. The rebellion, however, coinciding as it did with attacks from the opposition convinced the Prime Minister that in order to demonstrate both to the enemy and to the neutral countries that they were fighting as a united nation, changes had to be made in the constitution of the government. There was very strong opposition from the Labour Party to serving under Chamberlain and he resigned that evening leaving Winston Churchill as Prime Minister of a Government of National Unity, who said the following day, 'I felt...that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial'.

Notorious gossip, social climber and Chamberlain diehard, Henry 'Chips' Cannon MP for Southend noted in his diary for 8 May 1940 that 'Mrs Tate offered to bet me £5-5-0 that over fifty would [vote against the Chamberlain government] but refused to take up the challenge when I agreed, although she did lay an even ‘fiver’ with Alan Lennox-Boyd.'

Once recovered and reinvigorated, Mavis Tate returned to the fray. Herbert Morrison, Minister of Supply having listened to the appeals of the 'feminists' in the house gathered around him a ladies committee of the 12 women MPs to advise on how to make the best use of, kitchen waste, wastepaper, rags and the like. According to press reports, Lady Astor and Mrs Tate were seen to be a beaming approvingly…

Back at the Frome Division there was still some confusion over who would stand at the next general election whenever that might be. There was much support for Mavis particularly from farming and agriculture interests. There was also a rumour going around that once Fanshawe had been excepted as the candidate for Frome he had put his name forward as a candidate for Wells and was apparently turned down. It is not known if he applied for any others, but it seems that with Frome 'in the bag' he went on the hunt for a more prestigious position. Towards the end of June Mavis was in Fulham promoting the National Savings Campaign to raise money in support of the war effort with slogans like 'Save your way to Victory' the scheme offered a low return but had the backing of a government guarantee and was very successful. Back in the House she attacked what she saw as a waste of money in a government department known rather grandly as the Ministry of Economic Warfare which was concerned in the main with contraband and employed 1,461 people. 'Is the hon. Gentleman aware, she asked, that there are typists in the Ministry who have nothing to do but knit and read novels all day and who draw 10 hours' overtime? It is an absolute disgrace'.

In July she attacked a decision by the War Office not to allow women who could use a rifle to join the Local Defence Volunteers. As editor of the Women's Freedom League bulletin she wrote, 'shall she form part of a band of piteous but obstructive refugees; shall she remain where she is and watch with dignified disapproval the activities of the hateful Hun; or shall she resist to the best of her ability with such weapons as pokers, carving knives and pepper? We advocate the immediate disciplining and training of all the suitable women, in the use of hand grenades until rifles are available.' In support a Colonel Wedgewood remarked that, 'there are a great

many women who shoot extraordinarily well, many of them are match rifle specialists I do not know why they should be ruled out on account of sex'.

There followed what the newspapers described as, 'Women MPs 'Duel' over Aliens'. 'Young looking Mavis Tate and white haired Eleanor Rathbone', were in disagreement over the treatment of, 'enemy country refugees'. Miss Rathbone deplored the fact that many of those seeking refuge from countries occupied by the Nazis or threatened by them were automatically interned under appalling conditions,

> Miss Rathbone:- During the last few months there has been a tremendous influx of refugees from various countries and that influx has aroused fears of invasion and Fifth Column activities, with the result that there has been a tremendous public demand for the internment of practically every one whose family has not lived here for 100 years, in complete disregard of the individual merits of the cases concerned—a totally un-English attitude to adopt towards a problem of this kind. I fear that the authorities in this matter have been somewhat stampeded, even against their better judgment. Alas, all unwittingly, they have given some material to the German broadcasters as regards conditions in this country and the fact that we are now starting to pursue the Nazi policy of internment. I think it is understandable, and up to a point excusable, but what is not excusable is delay in sorting the cases and in keeping large numbers of people for a long period in internment, when they ought to be released and when there can be no possible shadow of complaint against them.
>
> Mrs Tate responded:- The hon. Lady has made a most eloquent appeal on behalf of the refugees, many of whom may have been interned, who wish, with all their hearts, to serve this country and to fight Nazi and Fascist tyranny. But have not some hon. Members very short memories? Have there not been so-called victims of Fascist aggression, who have been useful tools in other countries? It is no use saying 'No,' because it was reported on many occasions, when the Nazis overran Holland, that men who had been in Holland for many years, and who were looked upon by the Dutch almost as being of themselves, had been working subterraneously for the Nazi cause. Does the hon. Member for one single moment deny that the Nazis purposely used as agents refugees, and so-called victims of Nazi aggression, whom they had sent into other countries to serve their cause? Surely when we are in danger we must intern first and then make inquiries, rather than leave them all loose and make inquiries before we intern them.

Miss Rathbone, to illustrate the difficulties of discriminating, said that for all that was known Mrs Tate or herself might be a Nazi in disguise

> Mrs Tate: I may be a Nazi agent in disguise, but, if so, I can only say it is curious that I am one of those on the Nazi black-list—and I am proud of the fact.

It is not clear what she meant by the Nazi blacklist. The Nazi party had assembled a list of people to be eliminated once German victory over Britain was assured known as the *Black Book* or Sonderfahndungsliste G.B compiled from c.1937-1939 by Walter Schellenberg for Reinhard Heydrich a leading Nazi but her name does not appear in it and it is probable that she was just talking in general terms.

Meanwhile, Mavis was discovering hydroponics and grew some beans in her back garden near Sloane Square with a friend who had been growing vegetables and flowers for two years by that system. As an experiment beans were also grown on the roof of New Carmelite House

assisted by the *Daily Mail* to see if this was a new way of helping to feed London during the war years.

In a rather bizarre episode Mavis made a pointed comment in July when she asked if 'arrangements be made whereby members who run away from this country on missions invented by themselves should forego for ever the right of sitting in this House'. When asked to name the person she had in mind she replied simply, 'Marylebone'. The member in question was Alec Stratford Cunningham-Reid a former First World War flying ace who was indeed MP for St Marylebone which it will be remembered was where Mavis helped in the campaign of Quintin Hogg many years before. Cunningham - Reid, had left the country for America in July and was accused of 'shamefully neglecting his duty' and having done so for many years past with a record of voting in less than 5% of parliamentary divisions. Other members mentioned were JR Robinson conservative MP for Blackpool and Captain LF Plugge conservative MP for Chatham. Mrs Tate was about to expand on the behaviour of the last two mentioned when, it was reported that, 'a number of shocked MPs feeling apparently that it was more important to guard the reputations of fellow members than thrash out in the open a situation that has caused uneasiness among the public shouted *Order! Order!* and were successful in stifling any further criticisms. In a statement later Mrs Tate said that, ' had I been allowed to finish my question I would have said that, if members apply for an exit permit except for government business they should be forced to apply for the Chilton Hundreds (resign) as they in no way represent the people. Moreover, unless they return to the country in its hour of need they should be called upon to forfeit their nationality'.

Cunningham-Reid claimed he was arranging for some 500 children to be evacuated to the Honolulu home of Mrs Doris Duke Cromwell 'the richest girl in the world' with whom he had an 'interest'. Referring to Mrs Tate's criticisms of his 11-week absence he replied,

'This backbencher was not only irresponsible, but she was also untruthful. She mentioned that I was on the reserve list of offices and as such I should not have left the country'. He then read a letter from the Air Ministry dated 21 May 1935 informing him that he was transferred to the unemployed list, but was permitted to retain the rank of captain. He said that the plans were in place for his evacuation scheme, but the government was against overseas evacuation. Whatever the truth of the matter at a meeting of the St Marylebone Committee he faced repeated calls to resign which was put to the vote and went against him by 83 votes to 24. Despite the cries of, 'resign' he refused to do so and managed to carry on as MP until the general election of 1945.

This debate continued in the pages of *Picture Post* when a new word entered the language, 'Seavacuation' Mavis was given a whole page during which she explained that the government scheme for evacuating children abroad had been postponed because there were not enough ships to take them. Internally, children had been evacuated since the first siren went off on 3 August from the towns to coastal areas but only with the fall of France did it to become evident that the full force of the enemy might next fall upon this island but it would be left to the parents to decide whether evacuation abroad was viable. The choice of homes is the biggest problem both in the Dominions and in the United States, committees have inspected numerous homes and sifted them into various categories to be ready for all cases.

Away from Parliament she was asked to contribute an article, with others, on what a 'realist magazine' should be like for the *Suffrage News,* she tries her hand at philosophy with questionable success,

> To my mind a realist is a rare and lonely being, ahead of the contemporary mind in wisdom, experience and understanding. Practical and sane, the realist is intensely alive to the myriad tiny factors contributing to the sum total of human health and happiness but is unmoved either by sloppy sentimentality or windy words. A realist journal, should encourage truth, beauty, sincerity and joy, and should recognise always that capacity is not the perquisite of either sex or any age, but to be encouraged wherever it may be found. While upholding law and order it should discourage reactionary convention and taboo.
>
> The journal should foster cheap travel and the removal of trade barriers and every bar to understanding between nations. Peace and prosperity can never reign until the heart of each humble man is filled with greater love and understanding towards his brother. No mouthing of slogans by men and mountebanks in palaces of marble will avail as of anything. Such a journal will recognise that progress may not be as rapid as we would wish but that we must progress. It should advocate an education which would aim at developing to the full all latent capabilities and equipping men and women as competent units qualified to deal successfully with the life, they would be likely to encounter appreciating real values and the dignity of labour.
>
> It would encourage a realist health service which would concentrate on the prevention of disease and the education of the public and the physician to that end. Fresh discoveries will be rapidly disseminated to the medical profession who would be would kept up-to-date and the differentiation between mind and body would be less with no cure considered satisfactory until discord was removed from the environment of suffering. It would encourage a realistic religion unconfined to orthodox creeds, while recognising the underlying truth of all religion, it would appreciate that awful limitation imposed by the human mind, and the growth of God with his creation. Spurious movement based on mess neurosis may have popular appeal but have no relation to reality. It should support a system whereby the law would be based on fact not fetish. Criminals would receive correction less in accord with their crimes and more in accord with their motives. Such a journal will avoid the shoddy and the meretricious, the easy slogan and the cheap platitude. It will seek to deliver mankind from the fetters imposed by man.

At the end of October Mavis apologised to her constituents for her delay in replying to their letters. Her London house had been twice damaged by bombing and she had moved to Coigns, Gorse Hill Road, Virginia Water in Surrey and the average time for a letter to reach her from the west country was about three days - with many going astray altogether. Back in Frome a considerable body of opinion within the party was in favour of everything possible being done to retain her as a candidate in any future election despite the continued uncertain position of Captain Fanshawe.

'Chips Cannon noted in his diary for Thursday 5 December 1940 that,

'. . . there is a feeling of malaise with the govt. Mrs Tate tells me it is more than the last one; that she thinks the Germans will land, and that she has bought fifteen grams of morphine to take when they do. I asked her where she kept it; she said on her person; where, I again asked, but she refused to reply. She was sitting in the Aye lobby with Ham[ilton] Kerr and that Himpty Gumpty double fool Paul Emrys-Evans and they were all deploring the ineptitude of the govt, the bombing of our best coastal towns, the submarine losses, the attacks on our convoys. I was

furious. ‘You’ve got both the war and the government you wanted; why are you complaining?’ I taunted them. They were silenced. All three had been pro-war, anti-Chamberlain and voted against him on that fatal day'.

16. 1941 Equal Pay and a Disguise

At the end of January 1941, a delegation of 40 women organised by the British Federation of Business & Professional Women, including nine women MPs led by Dr Edith Summerskill and Mrs Tate representing between two and three million women nationwide was received by the Minister of Pensions, Sir Walter Womersley. Their demand was for equal compensation for facing equal danger with men under the government’s war injuries compensation scheme which then awarded 28/- per week to women while incapacitated and 35/- for a man. Mavis said that she talks to women she meets in shops or gives lifts to in her car and urges them to write to their local MP in the furtherance of this campaign, 'Women do not realise the inequality that is proposed but will be very annoyed when they do', she claimed and this was just one part of what was to become a protracted campaign.

In a short debate during February there was a tussle over the best use of manpower as the war progressed. Mavis took the Minister for Agriculture, RS Hudson to task.

> 'This war may all too easily be lost on the food front, yet the Minister, only a few short weeks ago, went into the west country and said to the farmers that they must give up tens of thousands of the workers on their farms. If they really have to do so, it may mean that hundreds of thousands of people will go most woefully short of food. The present Minister of Agriculture has come out as a staunch supporter of my sex. I do not think there is any truer feminist in this House than myself, but not for a moment would I claim that the average woman can ever compete with the skilled male agricultural worker. She may in certain instances be able to do as good a job as a man, but agriculture is not one of the jobs for which she is most fitted. She will go to the land, and she will do her best, but you have no right to ask the farmer to give up his skilled men. I beg of the Minister, whom I sincerely wish well, to think again when he speaks to the farmers, to speak for them and to work for them with greater sympathy and greater understanding and to remember that the farmer and the farmworker are the aristocrats of this country, the true yeoman stock of England, and that they will not stand for his bullying. The minister has not learnt that he cannot bully the yeoman of England, nor can he bully the soil of this land, I beg the minister when next he speaks to the farmers to speak with greater sympathy and understanding'.

'War Week' in Bath did not go entirely as expected, after a party of children visited several rounds of ammunition were found to be missing from the War Weapons Exhibition in the Pump Room and Mavis sent in her apologies as she was unable to attend to give a talk but her reason was not recorded.

Back in the House she strongly opposed the proposal to extend British Summertime by an extra hour saying that she was horrified by the idea, a delegate from the NFU said, 'This is merely to provide more leisure time and amusement for townspeople'. She asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he was aware that if the clock is put forward two

hours the cost of food production will be increased and the regulation will have a harmful effect on the production of food.

> It has been constantly reiterated by the Government that one of the most important considerations is the maintenance of our milk supply. If the clock is put forward two hours, it will mean, in ordinary circumstances, that the farmer who normally milks his cows at four o'clock in the afternoon will be obliged to milk them by the sun at two o 'clock in the afternoon in the heat of the day when the milk supply is neither as full nor of as high a quality as it is at a later hour. Moreover, the quality is gravely affected, and anyone who has had experience of the dairy industry will know that it is one thing to affect the milk production of a cow, but it is quite another thing to bring the yield back to normal. In addition, there is the impossibility of carrying on haymaking while the dew is still on the grass. It might be argued that the farmer and the agricultural workers might do the work at a later hour, but the agricultural worker has a very strong objection to working hours different from those of his fellow workers. It is unreasonable that he should be expected to break off work at a totally different hour and have his recreation and entertainment at a different time.

In a campaign to increase home grown produce and in the presence of a large crowd Mavis lifted the first spade of earth in a specimen allotment which was to be cultivated in Frome Park. This was in response to the governments call to create 1 million more allotments nationwide making as many families as possible self-supporting. Frome's quota was in the region of 200 but so far only one person had come forward to claim a plot which was very disappointing but put down to there being large gardens in the area.

At the end of February, she found herself in hot water and received a severe rebuke from Home Secretary Herbert Morrison amid cheers from the opposition. She had asked the Home Secretary where, and how, the Nazi German girl, Sophie Speilman, had entered the country in 1939 posing as a Czech refugee. The girl had apparently been sent from Berlin to Prague for three months to qualify as Czech and was registered as an enemy alien at Heswall, Cheshire, on reaching her 16th birthday. Mrs Tate asked how the girl had been employed since that date up to the present time to which Morrison replied, 'A girl of that name, now aged 17½ years, came to this country in June, 1939, under the auspices of the British Committee for Refugees: but I know of no grounds for the suggestion that she posed as a Czech. In fact, she was originally classified as German but subsequently it was ascertained that she had a Czech passport and was reregistered as being of Czech nationality. Since her arrival in this country she has been employed as a domestic servant, and I should be glad if my hon. Friend would send me some particulars showing the grounds for her allegations'.

To which Mrs Tate asked, 'Is it not true that at present she is engaged as a domestic servant in an officer's billet, and also that she was engaged to a Nazi officer and that she has expressed her deep desire to engage in espionage work for the Nazi Government; and is her employment therefore suitable?'

'I really think', replied Morrison with some severity, 'that if the hon. Lady had that information in her possession, she should have given it to me privately. It is the duty of citizens, let alone Members of this House, to convey such information to the Home Office. I will take note of the hon. Lady's allegations, but it would be much more useful, if Members have

information against people, if they would convey it privately instead of blowing the whole thing up in public, with the danger of revealing army locations.

Lest it be thought that the House was wholly fixated on affairs of state and the international situation the subject of cheese arose in early March when Mavis asked the secretary to the Ministry of Food if he was aware that the Great Western Railway was serving cheese and biscuits on trains travelling between Plymouth and London and would it not be better if cheese were to be kept for manual labourers who would normally have it for their lunch as there was a national shortage of it. The matter was to be considered.

In a long debate on the position of women in war work it was thought that if the government had failed to attract as many women as were needed it could only be because they had not been approached in the right way. Wages and conditions were obviously one problem and although women MPs were on, 'masses of committees' they had no executive or administrative jobs of real responsibility. Equal compensation for war injuries and improvements in the nursing services were other factors that needed to be discussed. Eleanor Rathbone put forward the view that there were still many households with far too many servants and too many women employed in the production and distribution of luxury articles.

At the end of a 'Women's Day' discussion in the House during which Mavis criticised a registration scheme which gave the false impression that women did not want war she said, 'The minister is a man and he made a mistake', to which Edgar Granville (Liberal MP for Eye in Suffolk) retorted, ‘Do women never make a mistake?' Mavis, obviously in top form, shot back, 'The hon. Member need have no fear. I should be the last woman in the world to say that women never make mistakes, especially when I look round and see some of the men they have brought into the world. There is no shame in acknowledging that you made a mistake in the past. It only means that you are wiser today than yesterday, and surely that is a position very much to be desired'. The House was convulsed.

Mavis was called upon to make an appearance of a different kind when she was invited to say farewell to the Chinese Ambassador Quo Tai-chi at the embassy in the company of Miss Megan Lloyd George, Mrs Elinor Glyn, Sylvia Pankhurst, Mrs JM Keynes and Viscountess Snowden.

On the 5 April Captain Fanshawe resigned his position as prospective candidate for Frome, relieving the embarrassing position whereby he had been selected to replace Mrs Tate after she had announced her intention not to stand at the next election which of course had been postponed until the end of the war. There were repeated calls for her to reconsider her decision and Captain Fanshawe was still on active service.

In June Mavis was appointed by the president of the Board of Trade to sit on the committee to advise on problems of the retail trade in the goods other than food considering the immediate needs of the conduct of the war and the position thereafter. She chaired a free public conference in the Pump Room in Bath to discuss the reconstruction of post-war Britain which was very well attended with Mavis speaking at length on the subject of agriculture. She was also devoting as much of her time as possible to the Red Cross Agriculture Fund, as head of rural collections and within a few days she had helped in the formation of six committees and expressed her intention to personally visit every county in England and Wales before the winter. As though that wasn't enough, she took a leading role in Frome Urban and Rural District's War Weapons Week the object of which was to raise £100,000 for the war effort -

the first day brought in £28,860 rising to an incredible £159,178 although this included the redemption of several substantial promises made previously. In September she was among the guests entertained by the wife of the Soviet ambassador when she gave a tea party at the Russian Embassy to women MPs, London Mayoresses and women of the LCC.

In October still fighting her campaign for equal pay and women's rights Mavis asked the Minister of Pensions whether he was aware that she had received a protest from 433 men and women of Boston, Lincolnshire, against the unequal rate as between men and women under the Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme; and whether, in view of the growing indignation all over the country at the injustice to women under this scheme, he proposes to revise the rates? In reply, Sir W Womersley stated that, 'While I am always prepared to consider representations relating to the personal injuries scheme, I am not aware that any fresh arguments have been produced in addition to those which I answered in the course of the debate on 1st May last'. Is my right hon. Friend aware, replied Mavis, that no fresh arguments are needed and that the original arguments are sufficiently forceful? and in view of the fact that compensation for air-raid victims is paid entirely out of taxation, are the Government prepared to reduce the income tax level of women, or is he going to allow the male population to be subsidised by the female population?' In the same month she repeated that that her election had cost her £1,100 and for the first three years, apart from subscriptions in the constituency, she had paid £400 a year, the whole of her then Parliamentary salary to the Conservative Association and has contributed £5,000 to the Conservative Party in ten years of political life. A very brief note in one of the papers for 1 November states that she had moved to Windlesham in Surrey but there are no further details.

During November, in a precursor to our own over sensitive times, it was widely reported in the press that Mrs Tate was to table a motion in the House in protest against the comment of Judge Frankland in the Bradford County Court who suggested that it might still be advisable in some cases for a husband to chastise his wife, she described the judge's statement as grossly improper and meriting the censure of the House. In essence, the wife of a doctor had ordered a fur coat and was unable to pay for it resulting in them both being sued for the money. The judge's view was that as she already had a fur coat and that her intention was just to annoy her husband, he regretted that 'an old English custom which gave a husband the right to chastise his wife was no longer in operation. It appears to me that if a certain amount of appropriate chastisement was applied to this lady there might be a chance for her to live more happily than hitherto'. The *Somerset Standard* was of the opinion that the judge was probably just making a rather pathetic joke and that, 'to take up the time of Parliament in the midst of a world war over this trivial matter is not worthy of Mrs Tate's usual balance.'

Upon the role of women in war Mavis stated that,

> I do not oppose the conscription of women, because I believe that we are up against such appalling odds that it is idle to maintain that women can keep out of war. On the contrary, we need the effective help of every man and every woman if we are to bring this war to a successful conclusion, as we must do. I know that there are one or two people who talk of the merits of a negotiated peace. I think that they are mentally defective. Personally, I do not know what the term means. You could have a negotiated surrender, but there is no such thing possible as a

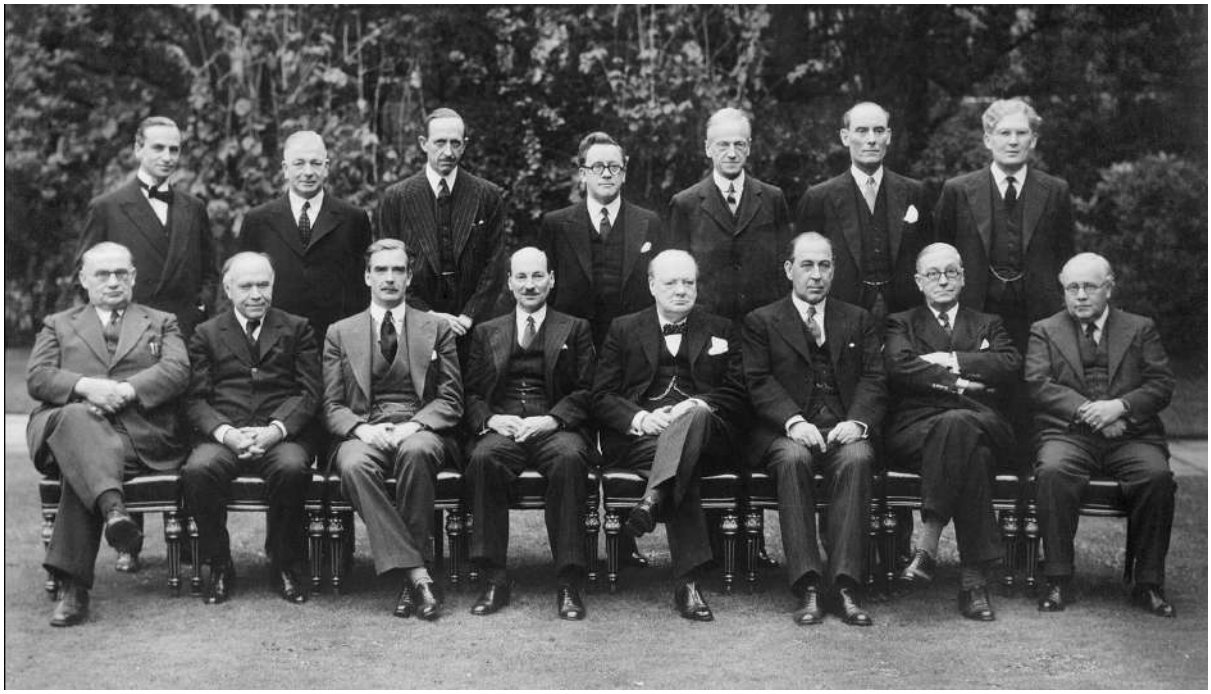
> negotiated peace. I wish to see this war fought to the utmost, no matter what we have to sacrifice, no matter what we have to endure. I do not agree that war is not the province of women. I support the conscription of women, simply because of the tremendous necessity and because I believe that in all walks of life it is essential that women should play their full part, both to fight in war to a successful conclusion and after war to build a new world that is worth living in and in which war may be forever ended.

Forever determined to get involved at a grassroots level she described her visits to factories to the House - but of course they were not ordinary visits. Described frequently as the best dressed woman in Parliament, she forswore her 'rich fur cape, smart black beret and jewelled brooch shaped like a basket of flowers' to spent a day in an aircraft factory disguised by putting on some very shabby clothes - a long waterproof, gumboots and an old felt hat, but did not do any actual work. On other occasions she visited war factories disguised as 'Mary Smith' a war worker. She dressed up as the mate of one of the workmen and spent a day there. She says, 'I knew that if I went in as a Member of Parliament, I should not see a true picture of conditions, so I decided to get in by illicit means. I passed six sentries and what I saw was exceedingly depressing. There were men sleeping in the shed who go to work in the morning and wheel out a few aeroplanes. They wheel them in again at night and during the interval they are doing absolutely nothing. Surely it is possible to find some way in which those men can work for the rest of the day. Luxury motor coaches drive them 15 miles into work and home again at night. The drivers earn £7 a week and have nothing to do between those times. In the middle of the day they drove the coaches out again to take themselves half a mile to the canteen as it was too exhausting to walk! That sort of thing is no incentive to those who are giving up all their spare time to do war work.' When asked by a reporter if she had dressed as a man she replied, Don't be ridiculous! Could I ever make myself look anything but a woman? No. I just put on some of my shabby clothes and went along as a working woman. There was a general air of slackness about the place, especially by groups of men lounging around the lavatory block.'

A plan to help people who had been bombed out of their homes, run out of ration coupons, or otherwise needed help was to establish what became known as British Restaurants set up by the Ministry of Food and run by local government or voluntary agencies on a non-profit basis. Meals were sold for a set maximum price of 9d or less. No-one could be served with a meal of more than one serving of meat, game, poultry, fish, eggs, or cheese. Schools were often used because they had cafeterias and kitchens. In London, mobile canteens delivered meals to air raid shelters and on the street in the aftermath of air raids. The resolution to establish a British Restaurant within the town had been adopted by Frome Urban District Council towards the end of the year but as nothing seemed to be happening Mavis asked the Parliamentary Secretary whether he had yet instructed the Somerset County Council to hand over St John's School, in order that a British Restaurant may be established on those premises in accordance with the need and best interest of the town? The minister replied that this was not possible because of 'educational requirements' but arrangements were being made with the council to set up in another part of town and a Nissen hut was to be supplied. She asked if it was right that the claim of Somerset County Council that these premises were needed for educational purposes was merely a flimsy excuse to prevent them being handed over to Frome Council. The minister expressed himself unable to offer an opinion on the County Council but had no power to

interfere. The Nissen hut idea fell through and in was not until 1943 that the town received its restaurant which opened on what is now the Cork Street car park under the name of the 'Union Jack'.

In September 1940, a Fire Watchers Order was issued under which men would now be compelled be on watch for a maximum of forty-eight hours per month but new regulations introduced on 15 January 1941, required civilian men *and women* to sign on for part-time fire watching duties. Women MPs of all parties supported measures designed to ensure that women contribute to their utmost capacity to the war effort but were unable to support compulsory fire watching for women unless these women, if injured by any action in the course of that duty, are to be compensated equally with men. The government's view had been that women knew that compensation was lower than for men but still undertook this task voluntarily. With compulsion, this argument no longer applied and a new committee named the Equal Compensation Campaign representing over 50 organisations was formed under the chairmanship of Mrs Tate to coordinate efforts. By the new year they were able to claim the support of 67 MPs and were organising a petition asking people in cinema and shopping queues for their support.



Churchill's War Cabinet 1941

17. 1942 Equal Compensation for War Injuries

Mrs Tate and Dr Edith Summerskill were outraged once more when a new government order required women in the National Fire Service to salute male officers, but men did not have to salute women officers. Dr Summerskill suggested that women should protest against this by

refusing to obey the order adopting, a policy of passive resistance. Mavis suggested that women members turn the order into 'an absolute farce' as the whole idea of saluting in the Fire Service was ridiculous.

Women's Fire Service Poster

She then turned her attention to wasted resources when it came to milk quotas,

> I absolutely support the idea that every single child in this country should be given the maximum amount of milk we can give it, that parents who cannot afford to buy milk for their children should have assistance, and that in cases where it is necessary the milk should be given

> free, but there is too little check on the distribution of this free milk. A case came to my notice the other day of a young woman who has a baby four months old, is the wife of a serving soldier, and has an army allowance. The House knows as well as I do how very small these allowances are, but this woman happens to be in good employment, with her lodging and food provided, both for herself and her child. Yet every day she receives one pint of free milk; she also has a ration card on which she is able to draw half rations for the baby. That woman is not nursing the baby and not feeding the baby on milk. It is receiving artificial food. Therefore, I can see no reason whatever for her to get half rations for the baby, nor can I see, as her income is a very adequate one, why she should be getting a pint of free milk per day for a baby which is not drinking milk, and which she herself is not nursing.

February 28th was the first anniversary of 'All Women Day' when male MPs magnanimously adopted a 'ladies first' rule and stood down every time a woman stood up, a system introduced by Miss Irene Ward and on that first occasion all 13 women spoke of topics of special interest to them. Returning once more to her determination to see that aviation played a leading role in the future she proposed the following motion,

> That this House, appreciating the handicap placed upon this country during the war through lack of vision in the pre-war development of British civil aviation, and realising how vitally Empire unity, trade and prosperity will depend upon rapid and efficient establishment of air communications upon the cessation of hostilities, urges His Majesty's Government to set up a small independent committee to consult the Dominions and Allied countries and to prepare a scheme for post-war planning of aerial transport. The consideration of civil aviation may seem to the House to belong more properly to the post-war years. This is not so, and I make no apology for raising the matter to-day, even though the whole world is reeling under the impact of war. To a certain extent we depend even now on air transport, and we could have done so to a far greater extent and to our advantage had civil aviation not been so disgracefully neglected in the decade before the war. I do not want to dwell on the past, nor should I refer to it were I not obliged to do so now and then, in order to prove the extreme importance of a wholly different approach to this immense problem in the future from that which we have made in the past, if this country is to enjoy any measure of prosperity or trade in the post-war years. All future progress is indissolubly bound up with civil aviation and to a great extent it must be prepared for now. Kipling said in 1909 'Transportation is civilisation,' and air transport after the war will be literally the life-blood of the Empire. I say without hesitation that unless the House will appreciate the gravity of the mistakes we have made and are making at the present time, of which they may not be altogether aware, then, even when the war is over, we shall be heading for disaster.

During a debate on the Finance Bill in May and continuing their fight for equality between the sexes, Mavis and Megan Lloyd George proposed that women should pay only 6/8d in the pound income tax while maintaining 10/- for men. Mavis gave her reason for the humorous demand which was that as women injured in air raids receive only 2/3 of the amount of compensation paid to men it might help to balance the books. The proposal provoked some serious discussion and outrage, but the amendment was withdrawn once her point had been made. 'Chip' Cannon alleges in his memoirs that at this time he, 'Chatted with that firebrand Mrs Tate, who says that the government will be out in three months' time, that Winston will

have a general election for sheer spite against the Conservative Party for attempting to act as a brake upon him; and that afterwards we shall have practically a Bolshevik government.' Substitute three years for three months and she was not a long way from the truth.

At a rally of the Women's Land Army in Bridgwater during May Mavis commented on how their existence had helped to wear down much prejudice which farmers felt when women were first employed on farms and how they are playing a tremendously important part in increasing food supplies, 'We have to face the fact that whenever the end of the war comes the country will have a difficult problem in building up its export trade. Due to industrialisation in other countries, many of our export markets will be lost to us and our financial position will be much more difficult, but one thing will remain –the land. Not only are you producing food but you are keeping the land in good heart'. She then presented long service badges to about 150 members of the Women's Land Army.

Mavis and Lady Astor treated themselves to a day out in June when they went to Plymouth to attend an open air dance on the Hoe to raise money for the Red Cross. Some 3,000 people attended and Lady Astor, who was the Mayoress, raised an additional £3 by auctioning a lemon. Mavis followed this up later in the month with a speech in Bath on the importance of rabbit keeping and moved from her London address in Virginia Water to 4, Grosvenor Court, Sloane Street SW1. At a meeting in the Bath Gas Company's showrooms, she spoke about the importance of rabbits. 'If you consider our shipping losses at the moment you must appreciate that it is absolutely essential that we should grow a larger amount of food in this country. When you are breeding rabbits, you are growing one of the most valuable forms of food. A fairly young tame rabbit makes the most delicious meal'. She claimed that she could guarantee that if she cooked one and they ate it with their eyes shut they would remark, 'What a perfectly wonderful chicken!' She asked her audience not to worry about the cut in the bran ration as rabbits could be fed on waste from the house and what could be gathered from the hedgerow.

Defence Regulation 18B of the Defence (General) Regulations 1939 was introduced by the government just before the war to allow the internment without trial of people suspected of being actively opposed to the war such as Irish republicans thought to be involved in sabotage campaigns or those thought sympathetic to Nazi-inspired ideology like members of the British Union of Fascists and similar groups. The effect was to suspend the right of such individuals to *habeas corpus* and not everyone was entirely happy with the way in which things were being run. William Brown MP for Rugby questioned the conditions under which people were interned or imprisoned. 'If these people are not convicted persons, and if they are merely internees, I want to know why they are put in the same prison with common criminals'.

Mrs Tate. Because of the lack of space.

Mr Brown. There is space in the Isle of Man almost as large as in the hon. Lady's mind.

Mrs Tate. I am very grateful to the hon. Member for saying I am so large-minded, which is something I could never say of him. (laughter).

Mrs Tate gave her views on the equality of the sexes once more in a Commons debate on civil defence during August.

There are certain aspects of Civil Defence to which I wish to refer. I think that no one who appreciates the present war position can feel that our preparations for the future could be too adequate. It is imperative before the coming winter that we should feel that our Civil Defence services are at maximum efficiency. I have never quite understood why the hours of women and men Civil Defence workers are different. I believe that women have contributed at least as effectively to these services as men, and I believe it would be satisfactory if they worked for the same number of hours. I quite agree that that may not suit the government, because doubtless they base their case for the differentiation in the pay on the difference in hours, but I should like to see that difference done away with both as regards the hours and as regards the pay. I think that no woman can have a greater honour or greater privilege than to be allowed to make the maximum contribution of which she is capable to the war effort and to the assistance of the country in its hour of danger. I am very strongly in favour of fire watching being compulsory for women as it is for men, but not while women, are compensated at a rate two-thirds that of men'.

Mr Deputy-Speaker. (Sir Dennis Herbert). The hon. Member must not discuss questions of compensation, which do not come under this vote.

Mrs Tate. Naturally, I bow to your ruling, Mr Deputy-Speaker, but surely any factors which contribute to the efficiency of the service should be possible of discussion when the service is under discussion, and it cannot be an aid to efficiency for women to be treated with such gross injustice.

Mr Deputy-Speaker. That is precisely the point, any hon. Member who has a sufficient amount of ingenuity can drag any subject into any discussion, unless the Chair rules it out of Order. I am afraid I must do so on this occasion.

Mrs Tate. I bow to your Ruling, Mr Deputy-Speaker, having said what I wanted to say.

As part of the campaign for equality, she gave her support to a 'form filling protest' whereby women entering details to register for fire watching should write on it, 'I gladly accept this duty but protest against the inequality of compensation.' Quite a clever form of peaceful protest until it was realised that the scheme would not work because the forms are normally filled in by an official…

Lady Hylton of Ammerdown wrote to the newspapers with regard to the Invalid Comforts Section of the Red Cross which provide parcels of work as occupational therapy for injured prisoners of war in camps in Germany and Italy for the diversion and relaxation of the men. She appealed for the donation of suitable materials to be sent to various collection points one of which was a Mrs Phipps at Greenleaves, Great Elm, presumably working under Mavis's instructions.

It will be remembered that two years before Mavis had criticised Captain Cunningham-Reid for spending time in America instead of the House. Cunningham- Reid questioned whether the house really needed a suggested recess claiming that, 'by the end of this year we will have had over three months holiday, paid for at £30 per day, that is wrong'. His further comments were drowned in laughter, cries of dissent and shouts of 'Honolulu'. Mavis joined in the fun with, 'He must remember that some of us have constituents that want us to represent them', to which Cunningham-Reid replied, 'I should like to point out to the hon. Lady that what she has inferred is not borne out by an incident which took place in my constituency not so long ago, when I was given a vote of confidence. If I remember aright, that it not quite what happened to the

hon. Lady some time ago in her own constituency'. The House roared with laughter and 'Mrs. Tate rose, glared around the house and sat down again without speaking'. Intervention by the speaker closed the topic. She didn't always win!

The campaign for equal compensation for war injuries gathered pace when a deputation of 92 women and some sympathetic male MPs addressed Clement Attlee the deputy prime minister who promised to give a faithful account of their grievances to the cabinet. Mavis, who had organised the deputation, said that the motion signed by 111 MPs representing 80 organisations and between three and four million women represented the biggest ever deputation to the government. Other matters which took her attention during this period were the spread of foot and mouth disease with over 200 outbreaks in the Bath area and 5,000 cattle slaughtered. She criticised the lack of proper attention given to the carcasses of dead animals which were lying about unburied saying that she had had the most desperate letters from farmers not only from those affected but from those on the adjoining farms concerned about the unburied carcasses due in the main to the lack of labour to carry out the task. In her capacity of looking after Bath's interests, she said that scarcely a day went by without letters imploring her to assist civil servants in getting their release in order to do what they felt would be more vital war work described as a, 'combing out' of the civil service whose employees had now passed the half million mark, it was estimated that about 30,000 could be employed in more productive work.

At the beginning October she lamented the organisation of the coal industry. In reply to Alexander Sloan MP for Ayrshire and a former miner saying that there was no need for a larger number of miners in the pits she replied that,

> His knowledge of mining is very much greater than mine. He has experience which I can never hope to have, because the experience of those who have worked in the pits and lived their lives among miners must of necessity be infinitely more valuable than any experience of those who endeavour to study the question from the outside. I only wish my experience of the industry were sufficiently good to enable me to pay the tribute that I would wish to pay to the miners, in whom I have taken a very great interest. But I cannot agree that there is not a greater need for men in the pits, and I think this is this a matter of grave concern. The Forster Committee Report, recently published, shows that in the last year in Somerset only four boys entered the coalmining industry. When one considers the very high degree of wastage because of old age which is inevitably taking place year by year, one can but consider that a most serious situation, and indeed the Minister said that was a problem which was engaging his most earnest consideration. I would ask whether it is not possible to restart mining classes. Fifty-five years ago the Somerset County Council commenced evening mining classes, which were of tremendous assistance. A very large percentage of those who attended them obtained posts as managers and under-managers. Twenty years ago, for reasons of economy, the classes were brought to an end. The coalfield of Somerset is very nearly as large as that of the Forest of Dean, where there are these facilities. I hope consideration will be given to the reopening of these classes'.

In a rousing speech at a Women's Freedom League meeting Mavis gave some sound advice,

> 'Never try to ape the men, women must ask for no privileges and for no special consideration. If women demand equal rights, they must shoulder equal responsibility and equal danger.' She complained that women had been denied administrative opportunity in the war. The fact that

the position was slowly improving was due more to the achievements of women then to a more enlightened outlook in the community. Women must be men's partners and play an important part at the peace conference and on all consultative bodies for post war reconciliation. The war has brought lavish tributes to women, but these tributes have been confined to words.' The speech included her views on the church which, she said, 'Is not a body that can truthfully ask for equality for all mankind. They do not look with favour on women in the ministry and would rather have worked left on done can see it done by women. There is a tremendous growth of spiritual longing and religious feeling in the country, but the lead is not being given by the Orthodox church.' At a speech to girls at Bath High School, she showed her more traditional side, 'there is no finer work then to be a home maker and a home builder. Do not despise the arts of the home, for they are fundamentally important, and more to be encouraged than anything in women.' She expressed the belief that what time should be spent on girls than on boys, 'you bring up your boys in a certain way but when he marries, he becomes the kind of man his wife wants him to be. That is why we must concentrate on the character building of our girls'.

At the end of October Lady Astor organised a meeting at Claridge's to meet Mrs Roosevelt the wife of the American president, for an exchange of ideas. All 13 women MPs were present, there were no set speeches just a general discussion particularly on women's affairs in America upon which she is very well informed. Mavis and Mrs Roosevelt had apparently met before in America. On 15 December there was a long debate on the compulsory treatment of those suffering from venereal disease. Regulation 33B provided that if complaints are made by two persons that a third is a source of venereal infection that person may be compelled to submit to examination and if found to be infected, to treatment. Mavis was opposed to the regulation with others including Dr Summerskill on the grounds that it was inadequate, lacking in vision, and calculated to make people believe something is being done, whereas pitifully little was being done'. Her motion was lost by 245 votes to 31.

The campaign to secure equal compensation for war injuries had begun in January the previous year when the British Federation of Business and Professional Women called a meeting of women's organisations to hear what Mrs Irene Ward and other women MPs had to say about a square deal. Then came deputations to the Minister of Pensions by 44 organisations led by women MPs and many more had been made since. Mavis had never missed an opportunity to bring it up in the House and elsewhere. Its supporters were very disappointed that the matter was not mentioned in the King's Speech on 11 November. The impending battle was given a good build up in the press,

'A woman MP is giving the government the biggest shaking it has ever had from a woman, claims FP Stacpoole the Press Association lobby correspondent. In normal times she would almost certainly have shaken it into submission or out of office if she now fails to do either she may still go down in Parliamentary history is the woman who very nearly made it. It arises from a straightforward question of whether women injured in air raids and other war causes should receive the same rights of compensation as men. They now get about 2/3 but the case is that for them food clothes, rent and rates are just as costly as for anyone else and that bombs do not discriminate and it is a matter of elementary justice If there was a free vote the majority of MPs would support Mrs Tate 130 of them have signed her amendment asking for equality yet the government show no signs of giving way and never has such a little motion caused such a large commotion. The three biggest bogeys seem to be –

1. Some MPs insist that were the government to be defeated on this amendment it would have to resign causing a general election and that the amendment should not be pressed to a division. Mrs Tate retorted that, 'it is total nonsense to say that any government in wartime would lead to such a narrow issue lead to an election and of course we do not want that'.

2. It is argued that equal compensation would be the beginning of demands for equal pay for women everywhere with the result that a disastrous sex war would begin. The services and industry would be disgruntled and the whole scheme of things upset. Mrs Tate replies, "This has nothing whatsoever to do with equal pay. Compensation is not based on the financial position and a man earning £5,000 a year is compensated as exactly the same level as a man earning a pound a week.

3. Some believe it could be a Conservative conspiracy to advance some party policy, others have counted the Labour names and concluded it might be a Labour plot to which Mrs Tate retorts, 'Utter rubbish'!

MPs have to decide whether to defy the whip and vote for a fair deal for women but some MPs even if they have signed the amendment may become a little chary of going into the lobby against the government afraid of the chaos that might ensue.

The Equal Compensation for Injuries, (proposed amendment to the King's Speech) debate took place on 25 November 1942

Mrs Tate: 'It is with very great regret that I feel obliged to raise this question here today. I make this proposal with regret for two reasons. First, we are, at last, after years of intense anxiety, celebrating victory, cheered by better news, and at a moment when we are mutually rejoicing one would not wish to voice criticism of the Government. Secondly, I regret having to move this amendment because I think it deplorable that after three years of war anyone should have to urge upon the Government the necessity for meting out justice to injured civilian women. The scheme for compensating injured civilians was brought forward by the free will of the Government in September, 1939. We were told that it was a unique scheme, and indeed this country might have been very proud of inaugurating such a measure. But from the first it was obvious that there were very glaring injustices and for three years we have been bringing this matter to the notice of the Government. The country was not informed on this question when first it was raised. There was very little interest in it, because there was very little knowledge of it. But that is not the case today. To-day, if this question were raised on any public platform, one would get a vote of at least 99% of the public in favour of the view which I am urging to-day. I can claim that when I move this amendment, I represent the will of the men and women of this country, and I would impress upon the House that this is not a fight for women. It is a fight for human justice and nothing else.

The Government, in opposing the proposal have changed their ground very frequently. First, I was told that it was impossible to grant equal compensation because the scheme was based on the Workmen's Compensation Acts. I may say that it has no relationship whatever to these acts. The Minister of Pensions then chose another ground upon which to fight me. He said that the question was indissolubly linked up with the question of equal pay but the question of remuneration does not enter into this scheme at all. The Minister of Pensions has stood, first on one leg and then on the other, like a cat on hot bricks. I understand that, to-day, he proposes to remove himself from the bricks altogether and that it is the Deputy Prime Minister who is to edify us with a pas seul, I have tried to raise this matter in a constitutional manner on every possible occasion. Deputations representing many millions of women have been taken to the Minister. We have tried every measure. A short time ago I took a deputation to the Deputy

Prime Minister from all branches of the women's movement, from all branches of Civil Defence and also representing the general public. The Government, having already considered this subject for over two years, then took eight and a half weeks before they were able to send me any reply, it essential that the House should hear his answer, which was the answer of the Government, to the representations made by our deputation. Here is his statement:

The Government have given careful consideration to the views expressed by the deputation which was received by the Minister of Pensions and myself on 9th September, on the question of equal compensation for civilian women for war injuries. The deputation confined its representations to the position of civilian personnel. It would, I think, be agreed that the position of women members of the Forces, where inequality also obtains, cannot be ignored. Moreover, so far as Civil Defence personnel are concerned, in many cases they are entitled, if injured either by enemy action or in the course of their Civil Defence duties, to full pay for a substantial period. This period frequently covers the whole of their absence from duty and equality of compensation when injured could only be secured by the grant to them in such circumstances of the men's rate of pay. Further, in considering the proper relationship generally between the compensation paid to men and to women regard must be had to the broad position in the matter of pay and earnings. In this field an undoubted measure of inequality still exists. The conclusion of His Majesty's Government is therefore that equal compensation to civilian women cannot be considered in isolation but must be approached from the point of view of the general relationship of remuneration as between men and women. A considerable degree of differentiation still obtains in this respect and so long as this remains the position, the Government do not feel justified in accepting the principle of equality in the matter of compensation. I think I have a right to claim that that is a complete change of front on the part of the Government, because when the Minister of Pensions first introduced this scheme, in September, 1939, he said:

'The injury allowance will be definitely on a flat rate basis. … It will not be in any way determined by means or need'.

I may have an intelligence very much lower than that of the Government, but when I am told that a scheme will have no relation to means or need, that to me is connected with pay, and I think I have a right to claim that in that respect the Government have gone back on their word, since the scheme was first introduced. As regards the question of the women in the forces, the scheme which I seek to amend deals only with civilians. It is true that I can see no reason why a woman whose hand is blown off on a gun site should have less compensation than a man whose hand is blown off on a gun site, but that is not the question which is before the House to-day, and the Government have no right to seek to confuse the issue. Men and women in the Forces are not equally compensated, and I believe I am right in saying that their pensions, in very many instances, are decided by their rank. Therefore, much as I may deplore these inequalities, I am not dealing with them to-day, and a member of His Majesty's Forces is not a civilian. Therefore, the two points have no connection whatever.

I will touch on the second point which is raised, that of members of the Civil Defence. That is a point of real substance. It is perfectly true that members of the Auxiliary Fire Service, the A.R.P. Services, and I believe in some cases the Civil Service, if injured by enemy action, do, for a certain number of weeks, draw full pay. In the case of women who are paid—again very unjustly, but I am not dealing with that here—the unequal rate of pay for exactly the same work, naturally for the period of their disablement, if they are drawing full pay, they are drawing less

than the men. But while they are drawing full pay, that sum is very much greater than they could ever receive under this scheme, and until those rates of pay are equalised, as one day they will be, I am perfectly willing, and so are my hon. Friends, to accept that while a woman is drawing full pay, we will not ask for equality. We will only ask for equality when she goes on to the civilian rates for injury and her pay ceases. Therefore, I deal with that point to prove to the House that this question has nothing whatever to do with rates of pay. I beg of hon. Members not to allow this to be confused with anything to do with Civil Defence or fire watching, because it embraces the whole of the civil population, from childhood to old age.

These rates of compensation are paid direct from taxation, and women pay the same rates of taxation as men. Indeed, married women are very badly treated under taxation, and I would point out that a certain concession has been made to married women with regard to Income Tax in the last few months. Was that made because it was right? No, it was made because you could not get the women to go into the factories while they found that they lost financially by so doing, and a concession had to be made, because they were needed. Is it realised by the House that there is only one other pension which is paid direct from public funds without any contribution, that is, the old age pension, and is there one single Member of this House to-day who would dare to get up, either in this House or on any platform outside, and suggest that an old woman should get two-thirds of the old age pension given to a man? If so, let them get up and speak in favour of that now, and face the country on it at a later date. Do hon. Members realise that two old age pensioners, while in perfect health, in possession of their senses and their limbs, are getting exactly the same income, but should a German bomb injure them from that moment they are given an unequal rate? Can any human being justify that—that old age pensioners draw 10s. a week each while in perfect health but the moment they are injured the man, in addition to his 10s. a week, draws, if he is completely disabled—100%. for life—21s., and his income, therefore, because he is ungainfully employed, goes up to 31s., and that a woman who equally with him was drawing 10s., receives an income, if she loses both eyes and both legs, of 24s.? Will the Government answer on what basis they consider that just and on what basis they can link that with pay, and on what basis they justify this differentiation in payments which are made direct from taxation?

There is another point. If a man or a woman is injured or incapacitated under this scheme, they draw compensation, which includes allowances for their children, and they draw exactly the same amount for a little girl as they draw for a little boy. Until the age of 15 years no one has discovered that the needs of a woman child are less than the needs of a man child. Is it not rather an extraordinary thing that there is complete equality under the age of 15 years, and again complete equality over the age of 70 years, but that in the intervening period, when a woman is giving so much to the nation, when she is being conscripted to the factories, conscripted into the Forces, the age when she is rearing children and managing the home, that is the period of time that is chosen to treat her with utter inequality and injustice? Can the Government defend that? I have heard hon. Members in this House on so many occasions, when they recalled their childhood, pay very high tribute to their mothers and to their wives. There is no one in this House, whether or not their own home life has been happy, whether or not they have made of it a success or a failure, who does not know that on the mother and the wife in the home, the stability of this country to a very large extent depends, and certainly the happiness and the wellbeing in the home not only of the husband but of the future generation, upon whom we have already placed a very heavy burden. I ask the House to remember not only that people who earn money come under this scheme, but that people who are not able to earn money are all included. When they consider non-gainfully employed people, I beg the House to remember that that man is usually either a pensioner, or someone living on someone else's bounty, or a

man of independent means, none of whom has a tremendous need for compensation. But the non-gainfully-employed woman is the housewife, who washes, who sews, who cooks, who cleans, who rears your children, upon whom you have relied for billeting, for salvage, for serving in your British Restaurants, for making your rations scheme work, for economising in fuel, for keeping up the morale of the country in days of difficulty—and there is no one who could say that the working women of Britain have not been a very great asset to this country in her hour of need.

Can anyone justify giving a man of independent means, or a pensioner, because he is not gainfully employed, 21s. a week for life if wholly disabled, and giving that housewife, who has worked and always will work, in similar circumstances only 14s.? Her need is infinitely greater. Indeed, a case might be made that a disabled woman needs a greater rate of remuneration and suffers greater disability than a disabled man. But I do not wish to make that case. I do not wish to appeal to this House on any grounds of sentiment. I have no need to do so. I base my claim on one thing only: I base it on justice. At last we think that we are beginning to see the dawning of possible victory. To-day, all over Europe, hearts that were downcast are beginning to have hope: all over Europe, people are waiting for the arrival of this country; and our Forces are said to be fighting for freedom, justice, and democracy. You will not be regarded with very great seriousness if you go out to fight for justice in Europe and are unable to give it to the stricken women of your own land.

I know it is no easy matter to vote against the Government. I have no wish to divide the House on this issue, but I intend to do so, because I have tried every other method. I beg Members to remember that this is not a party issue. It is not an issue between the sexes. It is an issue that is confined to justice: it is an issue on which we are fighting for women who are injured, and who are unable to express their own rights. I know I shall be told that this is not the time to divide the House. I have been in this House for over eleven; years, and I have never yet found the time which was the right moment, or the wise moment, to divide the House. There are always people to come and tell you that you will be doing your cause so much harm if you choose that opportunity. I would remind right hon. Gentlemen who sit, some of them luckily, I think, and some of them unfortunately, on the Front Bench, that they sit there, very many of them, because this House after the Norwegian episode had the courage to vote against the Government on a three-line whip. There were only 33 of us in my party who had the guts to vote against the Government on that occasion: it was not an easy thing to do, and doubtless it was a much more serious occasion than this, but 33 of us did it; and has the House or the country regretted it?

I read in my daily paper that the Government, having tried every method to prevent hon Members supporting me to-day—and I may say that some of their methods have not been very creditable; but I excuse that, because their case is so weak. It will be very easy for them to say, "Be reasonable. You have been offered a Select Committee; what more can you want?". After eleven years, I know how long it will take a Select Committee to report; and I know the kind of duplicity the Government will sink to. [HON. MEMBERS: 'Oh.'] I do, unfortunately. If they set up a Select Committee, I am certain they will link this question with the question of equal pay, and all the repercussions it will have. I am not willing to have it based on that. I ask the House to consider one thing only, the compensation of injured civilians. Let them not allow themselves to be led away by equal pay and by questions of the Civil Defence services. I have been told that it is not logical to ask for this reform now, because the Government have allowed concessions to women firewatchers. The concessions to women firewatchers were not made on this ground; they were made because most women, in addition to their factory work, have a hard day's work to do at home. I beg hon. Members, no matter what they came here prepared

to do, to look into their own hearts and their own consciences, to forget party, to forget whether it is to their advantage or to their disadvantage to join me in the Lobby against the Government, for the sake of justice.

After such an excellent speech her fellow MPs gave her an ovation and the amendment was seconded by Dr Edith Summerskill MP for Fulham who gave one of equal worth.

Mr Attlee: The Deputy Prime Minister

I am intervening in this debate for a brief time in order to make a statement as to the attitude of the Government towards this Amendment. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Pensions will be speaking later in the debate and will deal with the matter in more detail. I think everybody will agree that the Mover and Seconder of this Amendment have made speeches of very great cogency. I could have wished, however, that there had been a little less attribution, of the lowest motives to the Government, because I should have thought that the points made created such an appeal that everyone would have thought 'If these things are not so easy, there must be some reason for it.' I listened to the hon. Lady with great interest, but I listened with still more interest to the speeches of the ladies she was good enough to bring before me as a deputation. I think those speeches were extremely well delivered—

Mrs Tate: I wrote them all.

They were extremely good speeches but were delivered without that tone of intense bitterness which the hon. Lady showed. This matter arouses great feelings, and it is possible to take particular cases and make a very strong point about them yet ignore a whole range of other matters which necessarily have to be taken into consideration. The claim here is that where men and women are doing the same service and suffer the same injuries, they should receive the same compensation. That is an appeal which comes very strongly to all of us, and I would like to say that when I heard the deputation, I was strongly persuaded. I have striven most earnestly to see how this could be accomplished. I want to see this accomplished, but it is not so easy as one would imagine from the speeches we have heard. It has been based on the principle of equal injury, but the trouble is that we have systems that are based on a different principle—the principle in which compensation has reference to the earnings of the persons injured. It is no good in the least saying that these things can be separated.

It is one of the difficulties in dealing with these things that when you do what is a piece of justice to one lot of people, you set up a feeling of injustice in others. I and my colleagues have been trying hard to find out how we can get this matter dealt with on the basis of justice, having regard to the ramifications of the subject. I want to give the House one or two examples as to why I think an inquiry is needed. Let me say at once that this is not a question of an obstructive Treasury refusing a few pounds. I would ask hon. Members not to suggest that the people who are in the Government do not appreciate the points that are made but to recognise the fact that members of the Government have to take responsibility for I want to give one or two examples simply to show the need for examination. Workmen's compensation has been built up on the principle that the compensation has reference to earnings. It is true that at the top level of 35s., the amount is the same for both sexes, but below that there is a differentiation. One may disagree with that system, but it is in existence. Under the Personal Injuries (Civilian) Scheme, instead of putting a top level and then having an assessment with regard to earnings, the

principle was adopted of taking for men the highest amount under workmen's compensation, 35s., and taking for women 28s., which on inquiry had been found to be the average level of women's earnings as compared with men's earnings. It must be remembered that compensation for Civil Defence workers is not always a matter of someone being hit by a bomb; it includes accidents while on duty, things which would ordinarily come under workmen's compensation, and there one gets the difference between two people who may be suffering in precisely the same way but who come under separate schemes. This at once introduces a differential factor, and those people get a sense of injustice.

Let me refer to another matter. It is quite true that this injuries amount has been laid down, but in practice the payments are made to men and women of the Civil Defence personnel on the basis of giving a maximum of six months whole- time pay, 74s. in respect of men and, 52s. in respect of women, because—it may be right or wrong—in fact, the pay of the people in those services is different. This is a method of compensation, because it is in respect of compensation that full wages are given. If one were to adopt the principle as it is put in the Amendment, one would have to say that this compensation must be equal. I know the hon. Lady the Member for Frome said that she was prepared not to press that point; I do not know whether she has authority to speak for everyone on that matter; but the terms of the Amendment inevitably cover that question of compensation. The difficulties there can be seen at once. I imagine no one would want to reduce the rate for men, so that the women would have to be brought up to the men's level, and the women would be getting more than their actual pay when at work and the men would be getting the same. I merely point out this as one of the difficulties. But compensation is not given only in the form of an injury allowance. There is a pension for total disability. Pensions for Civil Defence workers and for members of the uniformed Services are the same in the basic grades, but they differ as between men and women. If it is proposed that the Civil Defence services should be in this respect brought up to an equality of the sexes, the same thing would have to be done for the Armed Forces. The hon. Lady the Member for West Fulham said, 'I do not mind any of these things,' but she will agree that those who are responsible for administering the Services must have regard to these things. I think everybody will agree that changes of such magnitude ought not to be made after one day's debate in the House.

Mrs Tate: After three years.

What we wish is that there should be an examination by a Select Committee of the House which would put the facts before the House. They would not be asked to form a judgment—that would be a matter for the House—but to present the facts to the House. I do not see any reason why that should take a very great deal of time. It is not the Government's desire to delay this matter, I have given one or two instances, showing that this is a complicated matter and that the House ought to have full information. It is not an easy thing which can be settled straight off on an abstract principle. You have to see its application. You have to see that you do justice and equity right the way round, or you may merely set in train a series of injustices which will be worse, perhaps, than those that you are trying to get rid of. If, as the hon. Lady says, there are no ramifications or repercussions this Select Committee will say so, and we shall be able to go ahead, if there are the House will have to see how to get over them, and it will make a decision.

Mrs Tate: The hon. Member has taken up the line that compensation should be related entirely to earnings. That is a consistent line, but may I ask him how he would compensate the housewife who while she does exceedingly valuable work, gets no wage whatever?

Mr Vernon Harriett (Bridgwater)

One has seen a great deal in the newspapers in the last few days about vague hints that the Government would consider a defeat on this matter almost as a vote of no confidence. That method of trying to dissuade Members of Parliament from doing their job is very reprehensible and regrettable. We Members of Parliament are ordinary men and women who happen to have been given the job of representing our fellow men in the House of Commons. The Ministers are ordinary Members of Parliament who happen to have been given the job of sitting on the Treasury Bench. It is our duty if public opinion feels that an injustice is being committed, to do everything we can to see that that injustice is removed. We do not suggest in the newspapers that if the pressure of public opinion continues, we will chuck up our particular war job in a fit of petulance. The Government's job should be to take the fullest account of the pressure of public opinion and to reject a demand for reform only if it can be proved that its acceptance in war time would be damaging to the war effort. I do not see that there is any danger of that in this particular case.

If the people of the country are prepared, as I believe they are, to face an increase of taxation in order to right this injustice—and nobody can claim that this differentiation is just—it is the people's responsibility, and it is the Government's job to give way. Instead of that, the Government are being intimidated by the angry growls of that fierce and terrifying gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I wish they would not be. I regret that almost the last act of the late Leader of the House was to adopt the incredible and unconvincing argument that there are not enough doctors to go around for pension tribunals for soldiers wounded in this war. It means that the Government's refusal on that matter will seep down throughout the country in the form of cynicism and discontent and reach every village where there is some Service man waiting to appeal to the tribunal. The injustice in this issue is much more dangerous and distinct, because, as the Deputy Prime Minister said, of the very large number of cases that would be affected if there were equality of compensation in this respect. I am afraid that if the Government insist on what I can only consider to be a negative attitude, the people of the country will feel that the Government are behaving with a rather childish petulance rather than face a question of obvious justice. In order that that may be avoided I would like to ask the Government whether they can give a guarantee in two respects—(1) Will they ask the Select Committee to report within a certain and very short interval? and (2) Will they give a pledge to the House that on the Report of the Committee the Debate of the House shall be free and that there shall be none of those questions of party whips and of attempting to frighten people by the ghosts of party considerations? There should be a free discussion and a completely free vote of the House. Otherwise, I for one shall certainly vote against the Government in the House to-day, and I hope a great many other hon. Members will do the same.

The House divided: Ayes, 95; Noes, 229 with the amendment defeated by 134.

95 MPs had been persuaded to support her fight during the King's Speech debate – highly unusual during the wartime truce between the political parties. The amendment secured the highest vote recorded against the government for years but was lost by 229-95 as there were many abstentions due largely to fears of what would happen if the government was defeated; one comment in the press accused Attlee of having 'torpedoed' the debate by announcing a government enquiry leading to a select committee whose terms were,

'To examine and report upon the effect of the proposal that civilian women should be compensated equally with civilian men for war injuries on the general principles of compensation and levels of remuneration.'

'Chips' Cannon's comment on the affair was that' It was hoped that Mrs Tate would not force a division [on equal compensation for women], but she is a determined minx, quite unscrupulous and a publicity hunter.′ The Committee was eventually to support her view and the government accepted its recommendations in full – in 1943.

Writing in the *Irish Independent* during October, a correspondent reported that, Mrs Tate was 'very amusing about her adventures when she first went into public life and how she had to keep quiet and pretend that she was amenable to male suggestion and advice, a nice pliable person who would do as she was told. My Word! a lot of people must have received a bad surprise! Later when farmers refused to go and hear the election address of a woman, she pursued them into the markets and harangued them from farm carts and persuaded them to return her for one of the most conservative constituencies in England. Now they are her strongest supporters'.

In mid-December Mavis took part in yet another debate on her pet subject, civil aviation. In a reply to a Mr Perkins MP for Stroud who had initiated the matter she commented with her usual wit,

> I very much regret, considering the very short time which we have to consider this subject, that the Under-Secretary of State for Air did not find himself able to sit with us and to go without his meal until a later hour…
>
> The Joint Under-Secretary of State for Air (Captain Harold Balfour): May I interrupt the hon. Lady to say that I have not had a meal?
>
> Mrs. Tate: Whatever the right hon. and gallant Gentleman was doing, and I am glad that he has not had his meal, it was a very great pity that he did not find himself able to sit here during the whole course of this very short debate. I am glad that those who so often pleaded the cause of civil aviation before the war have, deplorably, been proved right. They have the right to ask that mistakes which have been made heretofore shall not be made again. We owe a very great debt to the men in the Air Force and to the home population for the part they are playing in the war. Unless this matter is treated with the seriousness which it deserves, we may very well find ourselves winning the war and losing the peace.

18. 1943 The Beveridge Report and the Brains Trust

The previous November Liberal economist William Beveridge published a government report, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* proposing widespread reforms to social welfare which became overwhelmingly popular with the public. Over 650,000 copies of the report were sold – a very high number for a government document and copies of the summary were given to those serving in the armed forces. Beveridge proposed a universal system of social insurance financed by the state with contributions made by employers and employees from their pay. A

flat-rate basic (subsistence) payment would be made to protect people not working through sickness, unemployment or old age. This meant no means testing and everyone received the same amount whatever their social class or income. There was a commitment to full male employment for the proposals to work so that enough money came from employee and employer to the government. It was presumed that it would be men who worked and who were the main income provider for households. This created a number of problems for women who, if married, were assumed to have a wage earner supporting them. This restricted their access to full benefits and limited women's options for work provoking strong opposition from Mavis and other campaigners for women's rights as we shall see.

A Contemporary Cartoon

Despite reservations, Beveridge's recommendations for free medical treatment of every kind for everybody as well as social security benefits and state pension provision would ensure the that 'hungry thirties' could not happen again. A great deal of health and social care had been provided by charities and religious organisations, particularly for those who could not pay for doctors. Beveridge took evidence from many of the people working for these organisations. He suggested that they could continue to work alongside new government bodies in continuing to provide care. A survey carried out in early 1943 showed 86% of the public supported the report.

In January it was announced that Mr Walter Farthing of Bridgwater is to stand against Mrs Tate for the Labour party in the next general election succeeding RW Mackay who had left to stand as an independent socialist for Llandaff but lost. Mr Farthing is a member of the executive of the Transport and General Workers Union and a former Mayor of Bridgwater.

Tom Driberg asked if prisoners of war might be brought home by transport aircraft on the cessation of hostilities to which Mrs Tate remarked, 'Would you bear in mind that if they come home by British civil aircraft few of the relatives would live to see them'. At the end of the month a party of 50 MPs went on a jolly to Salisbury Plain to take part in glider demonstrations to help to understand their potential, but one of them encountered difficulties and made a very bumpy landing. Miss Wilkinson is understood to have a compound fracture but is expected to leave hospital in a day or two. Mavis was in another of the gliders, 'when we went up we had intended to do things which troops landing from gliders would have to do, and this was certainly a very realistic and practical experience, the demonstration was well organised and all the MPs were most impressed, I was not in the glider which crashed.'

In other activities she took part in a broadcast on the Home Service 'Mostly for Women' at the end of January but unfortunately no details survive. Soon after that she attended a suffragette Silver Jubilee lunch in London, 'this war has enabled many women to open the eyes of a few men, and some of us intend to prevent them closing their eyes again.' There was a meeting of the Somerset Committee of the National Farmers Union in Taunton which Mavis was unable to attend in person due, once more comma to her annual bout of flu but she sent in a letter to be read out,

> I want to speak for a few moments, on the subject of trying to prevent labour leaving places where it is urgently needed. For a very long time I have been urging that there should be formed a special branch of the Women's Land Army in order that there might be some house-stewards to assist the farmers' wives in the very-arduous housework, but that has been, apparently, considered impracticable. If that is not done, there is an urgent and an immediate need for the formation of a new body of women workers as household-stewards in hospitals, mental hospitals, farmhouses and other places of that kind. At the present time there is no question but that there is a large number of people who are desperately overworked, while a certain proportion are still not doing as much as they could. We have in the countryside numerous examples of women who have to work 16 to 18 hours a day in order to get through their duties at farmhouses which have land girls or other workers billeted on them, and all their help has been taken away. In many areas hospitals are closed for lack of sufficient staff, and here may I say that you will never have a sufficient number of really contented nursing staff unless you are able to provide an adequate number of domestic workers for hospitals. The domestic workers' status would be improved if she were given a uniform which would enable the general public to appreciate that she was engaged on work which was absolutely vital to the war effort.

> The shortage of domestic workers in the past has been due to the lack of status, and this must, of necessity, be very much accentuated in wartime when they see companions of their own does confer. Therefore, I urge seriously on the Minister that there should be either some badge or armlet issued or a definite corps of house stewards formed.
>
> I would also urge that considerably greater care should be exercised about the registration of women. I think it would be perhaps worthwhile to re-examine the papers of those who have registered, to find out whether women are looking after their own children after having stated that they were at the time of registration. No one will deny that the vast majority of women are grossly overworked, but there is a proportion who are not pulling their weight. The promise that women would not be called up or be directed to certain work if they had under their care children under a certain age has, in certain instances, been grossly abused. Women have gone to employment exchanges and said that they were looking after their children, and there has been no inquiry, no check as to whether they are looking after their house and children or whether they have help. In a great many cases I know women are desperately in need of help, but in other women have escaped on the plea that they were looking after their children themselves. I know of cases of women living in hotels who have taken their children away from boarding schools, at which they were being well educated and looked after, to live with them in the hotels in order that they might escape the call-up having done nothing towards looking after or educating their children. If we are to get in our harvest this year and keep our hospitals open and staffed, it will be absolutely essential to have women who could do part-time work.

It will have become clear by now that Mavis was a strong supporter of the British Empire, keen to strengthen ties and improve communication across its territories. Undoubtedly, the Empire's greatest possession was India. However, in August 1942, after Britain failed to secure Indian support for the war effort, the Quit India Movement was launched. This mass protest demanded 'an orderly British withdrawal' and full independence for the country. One of the most prominent organisers was Mahatma Gandhi, who had trained as a barrister at Temple Bar in 1891. The movement led to widespread civil disobedience and the arrest of most leaders of the Indian National Congress Party. Viceroy Linlithgow described the situation as 'by far the most serious rebellion since 1857.'

In February 1943, despite being 73 years old, Gandhi undertook a twenty-one-day fast to protest against his six-month detention. Reports on his health appeared in the British press, including one from Bombay on 24 February, which described him as cheerful, with no signs of physical deterioration. Shortly afterwards, a delegation of 'Indian women in beautiful native robes' entered the central lobby of the House of Commons to plead for Gandhi's release. They were met by several MPs, including Eleanor Rathbone and Mavis Tate. However, the government maintained that a debate would serve no useful purpose, stating that there could be no justification for releasing men who had 'deliberately planned to paralyse India at a most crucial moment and who have shown no sign of abandoning their criminal enterprise.'

Tom Driberg voiced concern, asking, 'Even on the grounds of practical politics, is it wise for the government to connive at suicide and murder?' To this, Mrs Tate added, 'Is it not worse for the government to give in to blackmail?' Ultimately, the British government came to accept that India was ungovernable in the long term. The post-war question then became how best to

exit—gracefully and peacefully. The Indian Independence Act was passed in 1947, creating the two new independent dominions of India and Pakistan.

Moving from an international crisis to the mundane, a list of signatories against the Sunday opening of theatres and music halls has been sent to Mavis under the auspices of the Lord's Day Observance Society. Mavis replied that if the matter arose, she was confident of it being defeated.

March1943 brought fame of a different sort when on Monday 8th at 4.15pm she appeared in an edition of the BBC ‘Brains Trust For the Forces' an informational BBC radio show on which a panel of experts tried to answer questions sent in by the audience. Originally given a half hour slot in the afternoons for six weeks its popularity promoted it to 45 minutes at peak time and with Sunday afternoon repetitions it ran for 18 months before being taken off for 'a rest'.

The show became one of the most popular broadcasts of the time receiving 12 million listeners at the height of its popularity and featuring the leading intellectuals of the day including at various times, Bertrand Russell, JBS Haldane, AL Rouse, Julian Huxley, Jan Masaryk, CEM Joad, and Quintin Hogg. Her appearances were irregular with around 18 broadcasts in total. There was also a travelling roadshow sponsored by the *Daily Express* initiated at Caxton Hall Westminster during April 1944 before moving around the country including Tunbridge Wells, Portsmouth, Cheltenham, Coventry, and Leamington Spa and a number of other venues. Her broadcasts ended in April 1946 and unfortunately there are no surviving transcripts but some of her answers were recorded in the press.

In May she answered the question, ‘Has the day arrived for women to have equal citizenship with men? To which she replied, 'No the day hasn't arrived it's long overdue. Human thought has imposed limitations on men and women which are entirely unjustified and entirely artificial; there should be no limitations imposed by habit or prejudice on the woman because of her sex, any more than they should be on a man, and it's a great mistake to think that men have something to lose by granting full citizenship to women. The world will be enriched as both sexes grow to full stature' When asked if family traditions should influence the choice of a career she replied that she thought, 'your choice of career should be guided by the contribution you think you can make to the welfare of the world if you can make a contribution along the lines of your father well and good but if you think you can make a better contribution along other lines I think it's your duty to totally ignore the profession that your father had'.

On the 17th of March 1943 the Aliens Bill was debated,

> I had no intention of intervening in this debate, and I will only keep the House for a few moments. I would not have intervened had it not been for the speech of the hon. Member for St Albans (Sir F. Fremantle). He has told us that in the interests of increasing the population and of unity in marriage it was essential that husband and wife should have the same nationality and exactly the same outlook. May I ask him to consider the position of a woman who married a German who was an advanced member of the Weimar Republic when Germany came under Nazi rule? Supposing her husband became one of Hitler's most faithful followers, changing his opinion, is that women immediately to agree with all that is done in the name of Nazi Germany? The hon. Member laid down that a woman, the moment she married, should give up all power of thinking and deciding for herself what is right and what is wrong. That is the only interpretation of the speech of the hon. Member. Women as well as men should be proud of

> their nationality. If you have any faith in your own nation, then your nationality bears with it a responsibility to engender within the world a certain way of thought. I believe in the British nation; I believe that British nationality is an honour and an obligation. I would wish women to have a full sense of their responsibilities as British citizens. That is why I greatly deplore the fact that British nationality in some cases has been obtained by paying a small sum of money to a British man who has been met abroad. To condemn a woman for life to a nationality other than her own because in the first flush of youth she married an alien at a time when the changing course of history leaves one with little power to foretell all that will evolve is wholly wrong.

During a debate on the reform of Foreign Service the question of including women in consular posts arose. Harold Nicholson said that it was impossible for women to be admitted to the service on the same terms as men, the special virtues of women, intuition and sympathy were singularly ill adapted to diplomatic life and if they married they would lose their British nationality and you're not going to alter that.

Lady Astor, 'we will one-day'
Mr Nicholson, 'it will take many generations'
Mrs Tate, 'you move like a tortoise.'

On 5 April Mavis's father Guy Weir Hogg of the Central Hotel, Auckland, New Zealand died at the Misericordiae Hospital died at the age of 82 after a long illness. Probate was valued at only £433.

At long last Sir Walter Womersley announced in the Commons on 8 April that the government had accepted in full the recommendations of the Select Committee on Equal Compensation for War Injuries and that the payment of revised rates would begin on 19 April. Needless to say, Mavis was congratulated and cheered by all sides of the House and throughout the press for her three years of tireless campaigning.

Aside from aviation food was one of her main interests and she was soon back on bunny boiling, 'There are a few things more delicious then a properly roasted and served rabbit', she declared to large audience when she opened the Bath Rabbit Club's first show at the Pavilion in Bath. She continued that those who bred them for food we are making a definite contribution to the war effort, the show contained over 600 rabbits. Her day continued in much the same vein when moving on from bunnies she fulfilled the role of auctioneer on behalf of the Agricultural Red Cross Fund selling one calf for £55. The British Federation of Business and Professional Women presented her with and outstanding accolade for forcing the government to set up a committee to consider equal compensation describing her achievement as an example unparalleled in the history of women, showing political leadership at its best.

On 2nd May 1943 she was the subject of a long article in the *Observer* newspaper, (abridged)

> A chuckling laugh over the telephone, a quick resume of the facts you want to know, and another chuckle before she rings off give you a good clue to the personality of Mrs Tate MP, victor of a two-year campaigner to secure equal compensation for men and women civilians receiving war injuries. She organised the campaign, led the debate in the house, secured nearly 100 supporters despite the solid stonewalling of authority, and was heartily cheered by the

house when she finally gained for women one of the greatest successes they have known since they won the vote. Achievement of anything so satisfying as a clear victory in the world of politics is rare but Mrs Tate's telephone chuckle was no less frequent during the years of the fight then in the day of victory.

Mrs Tate MP is how the world knows her. The public, her constituents, and the housewives of whom she has done so much, do not call her Mavis Tate. The explanation may be that she is an extrovert, not out to become in any way important or to be 'featured' but to secure justice for women and for men too. Remind her that speaking of the inequalities and frustrations which women have to suffer, she announced a year so back in Parliament that 11 years there had made it into a militant feminist, and she will tell you that, though that might be true she fights for justice which is much more important. It is as much in the interests of men as of women that opportunity should be equal. You will never have peace in the world until men and women govern side-by-side without let or hindrance. Women cannot take their full share in the management of the world until they have equal opportunity unhampered by prejudice or habit. Of course men and women are not the same, but that is no reason for closing the door of opportunity and putting up artificial barriers. When you see how bitter opposition can be to women filling any but minor positions then you know you are up against much more than prejudice and resentment. You are fighting a force of evil which stands against a better future of the whole world.

The highest vocation for women in her opinion is homemaking, but it does not follow that each and every woman makes the ideal wife and mother nor need they be debarred from working for humanity and the world. 70 letters a day is the average which come to Mrs Tate. They ask questions, ask advice and for help. Perhaps two dozen of the 70 ask her to speak on platforms, 'I try never to refuse if agriculture, civil aviation, or the war effort is in question.' The only way to find out what work is suitable for women is to give them absolute equality of opportunity with equal pay for equal work, work which would have been ruled out as totally unsuitable four years ago. 'Should married women work?' is one question she is frequently asked, 'That is for the married woman and her husband to decide she would reply. 'But does it not create unemployment?' The larger the income in a home and the greater the demand for commodities, and that leads to the creation of employment not unemployment'.

She enjoys her post because it brings her into intimate touch with individual human people which she likes, 'you have no right to be representing them in the Commons if you don't like them', she says. Her speeches are like her talk and her letters, calm yet warm and seasoned with good humour but above all sensible. Qualities that make her an excellent platform speaker. She never lacks courage, never loses her sense of humour and the House of Commons seeing her so pleasant to look at and so well dressed, was at first disinclined to take her seriously. But her unswerving integrity, the strong evidence of an independent mind and of the highest strength of purpose, convinced them within a short time that here was one who would not be turned from her purpose and beliefs but was also a good companion to be depended upon in leisure as at work. Work is something of which she has never been afraid, she has great diligence and a receptive mind.

Mrs Tate's is a pleasant home, tidy and neat, she is an excellent homemaker enjoying every stage of it from the decorating to cooking. She is a first class cook, food she says is something which you eat three times a day wouldn't it be unintelligent to be other than knowledgeable about it? Her sitting room has shelves of cookery books with English regional cookery of the Florence White type predominating, white walls, old flower paintings, and white lamps, it is the room of an outward looking woman one who could not be an egotist. Her love all things appertaining to the country may be expressed in her collecting of old white china sheep or of

'rum cows'. Her home, being a working home, has to her regret to be a flat not a house, but on a broad balcony she grows her favourite flowers. The telephone seems seldom to stop ringing, There are requests for more and more platform appearances to fit it into her House of Commons life, committee work, and meetings of organisations. One type of engagement she refuses out of hand is when asked to speak for a Women's Day, 'Why a Women's Day? Why put women apart? Is it not as citizens that all are called to back up the fighting forces? 'Peoples Day? Yes indeed'.

Mid-May was Clutton's 'Wings for Victory Week' with events scheduled in various parts of the area, several attended by Mrs Tate aiming to achieve the district target of £75,000 to purchase a Flying Fortress and a Lancaster. Staying with aircraft, June 1st was the scene of a very heated debate on civil aviation with complaints that the government had done nothing and failed to understand the vital nature of the problem. Government ministers hit back with the view that there could be no question of priority for civil aviation until the war was won and the world secure from fear but even so the Barbizon Committee had had several designs adopted by the war cabinet. Quite early in the debate she regretted that her warnings had gone unheeded until now and averred that the position it was much gloomier that anyone had declared or imagined.

In early June Mrs Tate left for Canada as the only woman member of a delegation from the Empire Parliamentary Association. In her absence her secretary Winifred Mitchell dealt with all correspondence from Flat 18, 99 Cadogan Gardens, SW3, their aim was to see something of Canada's war effort and discuss post-war problems. Before she left she explained that coupons clothes and currency were her main concerns. She will cover such long distances that climates will vary awkwardly, 'and that makes it difficult for a woman because only the minimum amount of luggage is permitted, and then there are restrictions on money as well as coupons. That will require all my ingenuity if I am to be suitably dressed. Mrs Tate is an acknowledged House of Commons expert on civil aviation'. A brief note in the press at the beginning of August announced that she had returned from Canada and Bermuda with the Empire Parliamentary Association and was now attending in person to correspondence from her constituents in both Frome and Bath. During her absence Frome's long-awaited British Restaurant, the Union Jack was opened by the chairman of the council Herbert Scott who covered for her. The new establishment offered seating for 220 people on the cafeteria principal.

On 2 August Mavis took part in a debate on Women in National Service.

> I wish to draw attention to some of the work being done by women of a very responsible nature at a disgracefully low rate of pay. The example I should like to take is the county organisers of the Women's Land Army. Far too little has been said about the work that these women are doing. In the first place, before you are accepted as a county organiser you have to be a woman in possession of a car. I do not know why, when you are making yourself responsible for the working hours, happiness and efficiency of perhaps 1,000 women, you should be required to produce your own car. No one asks a young man who goes into the Air Force to provide his own aeroplane. The two positions may not be comparable, but it is very deplorable that you confine yourself only to women who can possess a car. These are some of

the duties which these women have to do. They have to keep general watch over the welfare, generally with only one assistant, to care for about 1,000 land girls, drawn from all classes of the community. They have to be able to cope at a moment's notice with any problem which may occur in these girls' lives, many of whom have left home for the first time and are doing work which is exceedingly strange to them in quite new surroundings. In addition, they have to find and to inspect the billets where these girls are to be lodged. If there are no baths in the billets, they have to find places where the girls can have baths.

Where it is necessary to turn people out of their houses in order to arrange hostels for land girls, they have to do that exceedingly uncongenial work, then to engage staff for the billets, When they have found a hostel they are responsible for seeing that it is properly furnished and very often, because there is no one else to do it, they should physically unpack the furniture and move it into the hostel themselves. They have to pay the insurance of their car and all the upkeep, and they are exceedingly lucky if, when they have paid Income Tax, they have £3 16s. a week left with which to provide their own food, their clothing and lodging allowance. If a man were taking on work of comparable importance, would anyone suggest he should have under £200 a year? It is because of women's low pay that so many of the professions difficulty in finding women recruits. We shall never have real democracy until people are appointed on merit irrespective of sex. I would like every service and profession to be open to women, the Diplomatic Service, the Church, and every other. When I look round the world I more and more marvel at what men think they risk by taking women into partnership with them.

Mavis opened the Housing and Health Exhibition at the Pump Room in Bath capturing the headlines in the *Bath Chronicle* on 11 September, 'Women Must Plan & Make Their Ideas Known'. I want to see after the war a Bath which is not only a centre of rest, recreation and beauty but a Bath in which there is not one bad or ill planned home'. She urged visitors to take part in an essay competition putting forward their suggestions as to what constitutes an ideal home. She said that she was sure that the city council were thinking a great deal about the post war planning of Bath but that it was quite impossible to plan in a practical matter unless they knew what powers of purchase they had, adding that she thought there should be compulsory powers of purchase where is in the interests of the proper planning of the towns of the future. She made the clever quip, ‘Many homes have been built by men, but every time a woman stoops to open her oven door she bows to man's folly'.

At last, on 22 September 1943 Mavis was granted a decree nisi by Mr Justice Collins in the divorce courts on the grounds of the adultery of her husband Henry Burton Tate with Miss Gwen Edwards. Mavis's case was that in 1933 her husband became interested in fortune-telling and spiritualism. He was in the habit of visiting fortune tellers three or four times a week. One of them was Miss Edwards and towards the end of 1938 he said that he wanted a separation, she eventually agreed and in consequence of what she discovered later began divorce proceedings. Mr Tate had filed an answer which contained cross charges, but he did not give particulars, and the answer was struck out. Miss Edwards too filed an answer, but she was not represented and did not contest the petition. Little has been discovered about her early life but by 1939 she was living at 618 Rodney House, Dolphin Square, Westminster SW1 one of the biggest and most prestigious blocks of privately rented flats in London and at one time home to more than 70 MPs and at least 10 Lords. She is described as single and living on private means. and would have been about 36 years old when she and Henry first met. Gwen died on

12 October 1957 at the age of 60 at Vale Court, Colerne, Chippenham in Wiltshire leaving just over £9,000.

Unfortunately, we have no further details of their marriage breakup but we can assume a number of contributing factors. Henry was obviously distraught by the death of his two sons in a car accident when he was driving at the end of 1931. Spiritualism was big business at this time with many people trying to contact their deceased loved ones through mediums. Indications are that Mavis had little interest in religion and presumably even less in spiritualism. As a woman dedicated to her political work it is unlikely that she saw much of her husband and he doesn't seem to have had any particular interest in politics but did appear with her on the odd occasion: they may have led fairly separate lives after his sons died and she was fully occupied in Parliament.

When giving a speech at the National Council for Women Conference she denounced the Beveridge Report saying that if the plan was put into operation in its present form it will be difficult to imagine a more deplorable and reactionary measure as regards women, 'a fraudulent insurance and a step backwards for married women'. The plan she said was grossly unjust and when Beveridge talked of the marriage partnership, she claimed it was just dependency. 'I deplore the tendency of appointing women to committees here and there as sort of token creatures put there just because they are women, and it is no longer decent to have a large committee on which no woman is serving, that is not real equality'. She wanted to see a large number of women in Parliament admitted to the ministry of the Church, the diplomatic service, the consulate service, to all branches of the medical service and the stock exchange and urged the government to recognise women's rights to an equal footing with men in the economic world.

In a rather uncharacteristic role, once more standing in for Loel Guinness, Mavis presided over a meeting of all parties to celebrate the 26th anniversary of the founding of the USSR at the Palace Theatre in Bath, on November 7 with news of the capture of Kiev by the Soviet army from the Germans 'still sounding in their ears' the 500 attendees collected £72 for medical supplies and X-ray units for Russia. Ten days later she sent a message to a, 'Save Our Girls' 'crusade' meeting at King's Hall in London, 'I am in heartfelt sympathy with the objects of the meeting, she wrote, 'In my opinion the things to aim at should be, the provision of large numbers of trained women police, the improvement of housing and education, the raising of the school leaving age, and, above all citizen centres for adult education'. Lady Astor was also expected speak but, in the end, sent a message warning about the evils of drink and, 'immorality among juveniles which can no longer be neglected'.

The leader of the British Union of Fascists, Sir Oswald Mosley was released from prison by Home Secretary Herbert Morrison on the advice of five doctors who claimed that he was 'suffering from thrombo-phlebitisa a condition which causes blood clots to form and block veins often in the legs and although treatment could be given in prison he should be allowed a greater measure of freedom for outdoor exercise than is possible in a prison'. The decision caused about 1,000 demonstrators from all parts of the country to gather outside Parliament to protest. One woman carried parcels containing 23,000 signatures collected in central London on Saturday and Sunday. Dr Edith Summerskill and Mavis Tate where amongst those involved in the protest, they were described as having been interviewed but unfortunately their words were not recorded.

At the end of November Mavis appeared once more on the BBC Brains Trust. When asked if it was better to be born with wit or wisdom, she replied that it was not possible to be born with wisdom which is something that you can acquire through life but that if she had to choose it will be wisdom over wit.

During a debate in the House at the beginning of December she engaged in a bit of banter with the curmudgeonly old communist, Manny Shinwell who criticised a conservative speaker who said that, 'private ownership brought a bit of colour into our lives' with the words, 'I could have made out a better case for private ownership myself' to which Mrs Tate replied 'I hope it would be a better speech that you are making now to which Shinwell replied, 'I am, of course, a novice compared with the honourable lady. Her appearances on the Brains Trust denote remarkable intelligence. We must make the best of our natural resources such as they are' provoking laughter. She had been at a Brain's Trust event in Westerham, Kent the previous week when a local resident asked if the team thought that village life was more conducive to good citizenship than a crowded city, Professor Joad thought there was a lot to be said for living in close proximity to one another even if ones washing was overlooked, he favoured a town flat where he was not known by his neighbours with a country cottage in addition, to which Mavis suggested, facetiously that the professor (he was always known as Professor Joad even though he had never occupied a chair) was thinking of living a double life. CEM Joad was a quick-witted, bumptious disciple of Bertrand Russell, who treated The Brains Trust as a competitive sport and a chance for showing off which he did to great effect.

19. 1944 Churchill Defeated

At the start of the New Year Mavis was elected the first chairman of the 'Equal Pay Campaign' at a meeting of representatives from almost 100 women's organisations and authorised funds to begin a campaign for equal pay for women in the civil service. She had suffered from persistent ill health throughout her life and seemed to catch flu almost every winter this time she was forced to cancel a speech at the annual luncheon at the Bath branch of the Federation of Master Builders sending a note which read, 'Deeply regret. Have got up to soon after illness. In bed with high temperature. Obliged to cancel all engagements this week.'

Once recovered she spoke on Equal Pay for Juvenile Post Office Workers,

> Whenever we ask for equal pay we have one of three answers given. Either we are told that the woman is doing less work than a man, or that the man has more responsibilities than a woman, or that the Government cannot afford to pay the extra. The Post Office makes a very large profit out of the country. There is no question that a penny in the shilling will decrease its profits. There is no suggestion that a boy of school age has responsibilities which a girl of school age has not got. We come to the question of whether the work done by the two sexes is absolutely equal. I think the reply we shall get to-day is that the boys shoulder heavier bags than the girls do. I have taken a little trouble to find out what the work done by the boys and girls was. The headmistress of the Bedford High School asked her girls to volunteer for this

work, and she said it had a very unfortunate effect on them when they found themselves side by side with boys who had volunteered and it was considered that the girls, on the whole, proved more reliable, and it was not good for the girls to have the irritation of doing exactly the same work, exactly the same hours, and finding they were paid a little less.

With regard to whether or not heavy bags are carried by the girls and the boys, there was a letter in one of the papers, I am sorry I did not cut it out, in which a temporary civil servant expressed his dismay at having seen girls shoulder much heavier bags than the boys. There is an office not far from this House where once a week extremely heavy mail bags containing periodicals are delivered. On many occasions the men driving the vans have said that the bags were too heavy for them to take up the steps into the house. On every single occasion when that has happened the bags have been taken from the pavement into the building entirely by women. I therefore hope we shall not have the excuse, because we all know there is no real foundation for it, that the boys are doing work of greater value than the girls. I think no one will deny that a girl of 16 is a little more advanced in age than a boy of 16. Girls develop more quickly. If we had to choose between entrusting a letter, which we wished to be sure would be delivered, to a little girl or a little boy we should, I think, very often choose the little girl, because perhaps at that age the temptations of life are less great.

On February 26, as acting MP for Bath, Mavis addressed a luncheon at the Bath Building Trades Employers Association. 'As the health resorts on the continent will be non-existent for many years after the war, it is essential that this country should encourage its tourist trade, which is vital to prosperity. There is no city in the country that can build up a better worldwide reputation as a health resort than Bath.' She spoke of the urgency of providing new homes cheaply and said that, 'Factory produced houses will have to go up and from the exterior no one would know they were prefabricated. I believe houses of this type will be constructed for people to see within the next eight months.'

At last, on 21 February her marriage was at an end when the Decree Nisi Absolute was granted in the divorce court, and she was free of Henry Tate for good. Henry did not stay single for long and on 17 March he married Gwen Edwards at the Unitarian Essex Church, Palace Gardens, London W8 a farmer's daughter aged 48 from The Old Hall, Findern in Derby. ~~His third wife,~~ Gwen died in 1957 at the age of 60 which did nothing to dampen his interest in philosophy and spiritualism. In 1960 at the age of 77 he had two books published by the Psychic Press on the philosophy of the east under the name of John N East both of which he dedicated to Gwen. *Eternal Quest* and *Man the Immortal.* The books are over long and repetitive following the basic trend of Theosophy and expressing the belief that modern quantum theory and the physical solidity of objects is an illusion which fits in with Tibetan Buddhism. He was apparently much impressed with the work of Dr Walter Evans-Wentz an American Theosophist and the author of an early translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* along with the theories of Carl Jung and his collective unconscious. Henry Burton Tate of Woodside House, Staples Hill, Freshford, Bath died on 29 January 1962 at the age of 79.

Despite her ill health and massive workload, Mavis remained a woman of fashion who took pride in her appearance. Speaking at a display by National Hosiery Manufacturers Federation she expressed delight that British manufacturers had developed a 'dream stocking' that would be available after the war. She was assured that they 'will be equally alluring seamless or non-seamless' and that 'Wild horses would not draw from me, even if I knew, the secret of its material, and although women may cheerfully except all kinds of wartime clothing restrictions

they will in the long run have the stockings they desire.' The stockings displayed were apparently 'outsheer high twist productions which were bound to be in short supply and of 'Leap Year' shade a new tone of attractive sand colour'.

In early March it was announced that Loel Guinness would not stand at the next election and there were strong suggestions that Mavis might be invited to put herself forward. During a debate on Nutrition and Infant Mortality on 8 March she bemoaned the state of the nation's health. 'Year after year, when we listen to Ministry of Health debates, we are told that there is a great improvement in the health of the people. They live to be older, and we are given figures to show that certain diseases are far less prevalent than they were but I wonder whether they are really as healthy as their ancestors. When you dig up old skeletons you generally find that they have got a large proportion of their teeth and that they were of comparatively fine physique. We lose our teeth at an early age and the vast a portion of people are tired and listless.' Porridge was apparently a good and wholesome part of the diet but 'difficult to prepare properly on the coal allowance and in some of the synthetic soft drinks I should question whether there is any food value at all and whether people approve of beer or not I believe it is a fairly nourishing a drink. It would be extraordinarily difficult to put on weight on synthetic juices, but you can on beer. I dare not drink it for that reason'.

The Minister of Health (Henry Willink) introduced the topic of post-war housing during a debate on 15 March 1944 and for once Mrs Tate found her sympathies in line with the government on the motion,

'That this House, being concerned at the hardship caused by the stoppage of house building during the war and recognising the urgent need to provide for families without homes of their own, is of the opinion that all possible steps should be taken, consistent with the paramount needs of the war effort, to enable house building to be resumed at the earliest moment.'

> The Minister of Town and Country Planning, when he is faced with a difficulty, is very much in the same position as a jerry-building when faced with a bomb; he crumbles. I only wish it went a little bit further and that he would disappear. I am not one of those who are always complimenting the Government, but far too little praise has been given to the housing policy which has been announced to-day, and which shows very great imagination, courage, and constructive ability. The Minister of Health is one of the most generous minded of men, and I am sure that he would be the first to agree with me that he owes a tremendous debt to the Minister of Works. I should like to see whole housing policy under the Ministry of Works and deplore any change of Minister, because I think he is one of the ablest we have had, with the most drive, energy and imagination. No one in this House who is aware of conditions in their constituency does not know the appalling tragedy caused by the lack of accommodation and housing at the present time. There has been a great deal of talk about what women have done and have had to put up with in this war, but one of the main irritations has been the sharing of their homes and kitchens, and the hopeless lack of any form of privacy. We know that there is bound to be a terrible shortage of houses for many years, but surely this House will be sufficiently generous to acknowledge that, in view of the difficulties there will be with materials and labour, the programme of the Government is very generous. The Minister has promised us a large number of permanent houses and a large number of temporary houses, and converted buildings, and that is leaving out any contribution which may be made by private enterprise.

Mr Silverman: Surely the hon. Lady heard the Minister say that, on a conservative and moderate estimate, there would be an immediate need when the war had finished in Europe for 1,000,000 houses, of which he proposed to supply 300,000 in the first two years. Is that a generous policy?

Mrs Tate: The hon. Member's hearing and mine are evidently not the same, but as I do not wish to think like the hon. Member in any way, I almost always differ from him. I still maintain that the actual housing programme is extremely good if it can be lived up to and I believe it can. The figure given by the Minister incidentally was not that which was mentioned by the hon. Member. Also, the Minister left entirely out of account the temporary houses and the converted houses, and any houses which may be built by private enterprise. Anyone who goes forth and lets the country believe that we can produce the number of houses required immediately after the war is simply deceiving the public.

There would be nothing more cruel than to pretend it is a problem which we can solve in a year or two, because that is not possible. Nevertheless, some Members are too nervous as to the difficulties which will arise from the shortage of building operatives. We can easily have too little imagination about the possibilities of modern methods. There are extraordinary inventions available to us if we have the courage to avail ourselves of modern scientific invention. For that reason, I should particularly like to congratulate the Minister of Health, and also the Minister of Works, on the experimental houses which are being built by private enterprise and the Government, for permanent houses, temporary houses and converted buildings. They are being built in wartime in spite of all the very great difficulties and in a very short space of time. I believe they will be houses of a quality to satisfy, any reasonable requirements. All of us agree that, however great the need for houses, the very last thing we wish to see is shoddy and shabby building making for slums in the future. The phrase 'prefabricated house' has been most misleading to many people. I think it would be far better to say 'factory-produced houses.' I believe that we must have factory-produced houses not only for temporary buildings but for permanent buildings as well. I believe that there are excellent materials which will be available, that the exteriors of these houses can be suited to the localities in which the houses are built, and be indistinguishable externally from the best buildings of the past.

The cost need not be excessive; standardisation will be the main factor in reduction of cost. What is vital is that if we are to have experimental houses they should be seen by local authorities in the country and that, when they have been seen and approved, existing by-laws should be changed to conform to modern invention. I would stress the point that by-laws should be nationalised and not localised as at present.

After a talk on rural affairs to the Women's Land Army and the Young Farmers Clubs at Chew Magna one paper commented that 'it was with the effect of a fresh breeze of common sense that Mrs Tate bluntly condemned the pasteurisation of milk-which the government is now forcing upon the dairyman at the cost of much dislocation and hardship, describing it as 'retrograde and deplorable'. Her scepticism about scientific and medical evidence which she claims 'changes from day to day' is not without warrant, the article continued. She declared herself an enthusiastic supporter of country colleges and the marvellous opportunities that they provided and was quite certain that the best policy was mixed farming with more livestock and products such as milk meat and eggs. The meeting was described as extremely enthusiastic and did not conclude until a very late hour. One commentator in the *Western Daily Press* remarked,

'What is so attractive about Mrs Tate to True Rurals is what in a horse we call mettle-spirit or courage-and a zeal in well doing nothing seems to quench. Being thoroughly disillusioned myself I listened to her speech lost in wonder that anyone so intelligent could be so optimistic'.

On 28 March 1944 Mavis, Lady Astor and others supported a vote against the government on an amendment to the English Education Bill also known as the 'Butler Act' after RA Butler President of the Board of Education, who drafted the legislation which was designed to be introduced after the war and bring together numerous educational bodies like the church and private schools under one system. Cazalet Keir the Unionist MP for Islington East supported by Mavis proposed an amendment which called for the school leaving age to be raised to 16 years only one year after it had been raised to 15 . The Labour rank-and-file voted in favour along with other Conservative MPs, but it was defeated by 172 votes to 137. Another amendment requested a guarantee of equal pay between the sexes, and a vote was forced on the issue. In at least one London School, she pointed out, men were paid £84 more than women. Butler opposed the amendment saying that it would 'upset the plans of the whole machinery under which teacher's salaries were arranged and that a vote against me is not in the interests of this great education reform'. Mrs Tate gave her to support the amendment.

> 'The hon. Member for Stafford (Major Thorneycroft) told us he was not a feminist, but I listened with great interest to him putting forward every feminist argument that I have ever used myself. I think there is a great deal of misunderstanding as to what constitutes a feminist. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock (Mr Lindsay) said earlier to-day that the one thing which would make this Bill a reality would be the quality of the teachers, and that is true. I venture to suggest that however good a woman teacher is, she is unable to put forward her best—and teaching is a very exacting profession—unless she is free from financial care, and able to employ the same labour to look after her home, as a man would expect to have in his work. If she is paid at a much lower rate, she must, inevitably, have worries and preoccupations which her male colleagues do not. The Minister will tell us that this is not the moment, and this is not the place and this is not the time and that, indeed, it will not be possible to take this step in this Bill, but I do not ask too much. I do not ask that the Government should lead it. I merely ask that the Government should keep abreast of what is now really the public opinion of the country, that men and women should, when doing precisely the same work, be paid at precisely the same rate.

At the division the government was defeated by one vote 117-116, the only time that the wartime government lost a vote. Cheering broke out in the house with one opposition MP calling across to the Minister, 'What are you going to do now?' Taken by surprise at this unlikely event members were quick to jump up and express the hope that the result was not to be regarded as a vote against the minister or the Bill itself. On the government's behalf, Anthony Eden accepted a motion by a Labour MP that the government should consider its position in the light of the result and report back as soon as possible. Churchill was furious and ignoring advice to swallow his pride and accept the situation, used a sledgehammer to crack a nut turning the matter into a question of confidence in the government as a whole knowing that few would allow a minor amendment over teacher’s pay to defeat a government in wartime. He removed clause 2 which had provoked the amendment entirely and the Bill went into the report stage without it. Mavis making the point,

'My hon. Friends and I, who have, consistently for many years, worked and spoken in favour of equal pay for equal work would regard nothing as being more tragic than that very minor issue, compared to the tremendous issues which face this country at the present time, should have come to be debated as a matter of confidence in the Government with regard to the conduct of the war. There is nothing we should more sincerely deplore. But I think the Government have been hardly fair with the House, in view of the support they must have known existed on this question.....

…...there is still a Motion on the Order Paper with regard to equal pay in the Civil Service and it will make the position of many Members really farcical if we cannot debate subjects, and vote on questions on which we are known to be pledged, without that being considered to express a lack of confidence in the Government. I am second to none in my confidence in the Prime Minister and in my wish to give him every possible support at a time when all of us must be conscious that the burden on his shoulders is almost more than can be borne. I beg that the matter of equal pay may soon be discussed by a Royal Commission, outside the House altogether, and that we may, on our next Sitting Day, be given the opportunity of a straight Vote of Confidence in the Government, with the assurance that this question should be debated and considered outside the House.'

The point had been made – and received widespread support, a Royal Commission was set up to consider the matter, and a victory must have seemed close but it was to be some time before equal pay for equal work was achieved. Butler's Education Act received royal assent on 3 August1944 and was considered a model of progressive education until its repeal in 1996.

At the end of April it was announced that Greenleaves, her country residence at Great Elm since 1937was to be put up for auction on the 26th by order of Downside Abbey Trustees at the George Hotel in Frome, 'Charmingly placed and highly attractive detached freehold residence sold freehold with vacant possession on completion the property was described as containing 2 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms, (each with hot and cold water basins) 2 staircases, 2 bathrooms, kitchen with an 'Esse Minor' cooker and offices, loggia, terraced garden, outbuildings and garage Council's water supply and electricity By telephone appointment only Mrs Phipps phone Mells 781944-04-26. 'A fair company was present, but bidding was not brisk' The property achieved £2,500 plus £58 for fixtures.

The Daily Express Brains Trust Team in 1944

Since the outbreak of war Mavis had been acting MP for the City of Bath while Loel Guinness was away on active service she had dealt with a mass of correspondence and helped hundreds of residents as well as looking after the concerns of her own constituents in Frome. The expectation was that she would one day stand as conservative candidate for the city but this was not be the case. Mavis said that she had not been approached and requested to continue in the -Frome Division. In mid-April the Bath Conservative Association began the process of choosing prospective candidates and Mavis addressed the executive saying that, 'everyone will agree that it is wiser that I should no longer be in any way associated with the city politically so I will ask any constituents who are in need of assistance to please apply to Mr Loel Guinness's secretary.' The name of the new candidate would be announced in July and Mavis gave her full support describing herself as 'an unsuccessful candidate for the honour of representing Bath at Westminster.' When asked if she intended to contest the next election, she gave an indeterminate reply but described the Frome Conservative Association's state of unpreparedness for election activities as 'a calamity'. 'The Association' she said, 'has no president, no chairman, no office staff, and I don't suppose it has any funds!' There were rumours of her being proposed as prospective candidate for Bristol West after the withdrawal of CT Culverwell which she denied but declined to say if she would accept it if she *was* asked.

In May Mavis and Lady Astor made up a party of MPs who inspected a prefabricated factory 'Churchill' house near the Tate Gallery in London constructed by the Ministry of Works. Members walked around tapping the outside walls and climbed on garden chairs to inspect the roof declaring themselves pleased with the large number of windows and cupboards. During Weston-Super-Mare's Salute the Soldier week she once more performed the office of auctioneer obtaining £67 for two oranges when more than 2,000 people attended the opening ceremony.

Back in the House Mavis introduced a new clause to the Finance Bill, explaining her position, ‘When women were conscripted for National Service a concession was made in the income tax allowances whereby the first £80 of a woman's earnings were exempted from tax. The woman who has children billeted in her home is doing exceedingly important war work, work which frequently occupies her for an unlimited number of hours, is very exhausting and often involves her in expense. Because of the children who are billeted upon her she is unable to go to work outside the home for a salary, and the object of this clause is simply to ensure that where children under 16 are billeted the housewife who is looking after them should not be in a less favourable position than a woman who can go out to work. It is, therefore, proposed that for every child under the age of 16 the man of the house should be granted the exemption of £25 of his earnings from income tax. The exemption has to be granted to the father in the home because the wife is not actually earning any money. It is a very small concession to ask, and I hope the Chancellor will regard this as an opportunity to show his appreciation of the work done by women who have taken in evacuee children. In many instances they have been with them from the beginning of the war, and their parents in some cases no longer correspond with them'.

In July came the all-important Housing (Temporary Provisions) Bill introduced by Mr Willink, Minister of Health,

'Parliament will be asked to empower the responsible Ministers, as after the last war, to confirm compulsory purchase orders for the acquisition of land for housing purposes without holding an inquiry'.

Mrs Tate gave her enthusiastic support to the Bill again emphasising the advantages of modern methods of construction,

> I think that everyone in the House will agree that the subject of housing is one which to-day, outside the immediate prosecution of the war, is of greater interest to most of us than, perhaps, any other. It cannot possibly be denied that every hour we live, this question is becoming of more vital importance to the people of this country. Therefore, I very much welcome, the introduction of this Bill today as an earnest of the Government's intention to deal with the problem at the earliest possible moment. I also welcome the Minister's statement that the amount of the subsidy is not to be determined at present. In spite of the immense rise in building costs, I think it will be possible to find new methods which will also reduce expense in the future. For instance, the cost of houses could be reduced by the standardisation of fittings and by the use of more modern materials and methods of construction. The Minister is, of course, aware that the subsidy was originally meant only for houses which were built to replace other houses. When we passed the Act in 1936, we all had very high hopes of it, but when, in 1938, it was applied to the country districts, many of us felt that a large number of houses were being destroyed, which could, in fact, have been repaired and made perfectly habitable.
>
> On 31st May, 1938, I tried to bring in a Private Member's Bill—the Housing (Rural Cottages Protection) Bill—in order to safeguard some of these houses. In the county of Somerset, we went further than that. We set up a committee on which were doctors, architects, builders, clergy and social workers to inquire into the houses which had been condemned in order to enable the local authorities to get the subsidy with which to build new houses and to inspect

them. We did not attempt to save any houses over which we thought there could be argument as to whether or not they ought to go only those which we felt sure could be made habitable and reasonably comfortable for the owner, and which we believed it was quite inexcusable to destroy. We were not successful in saving one single house. At that time, it was useless to appeal to the Minister as I do not think it was possible for him to go behind his own Act. A great many of the houses condemned in 1938 and scheduled for demolition were never actually demolished because of the outbreak of hostilities and their owners are still living in them. I hear that it is improbable that they have been modernised in the interval, but I would very sincerely ask the Minister to consider extending this subsidy and granting it for the repair of houses which were condemned in 1938, where, after another inspection, such repairs are considered practicable.

I would like to tell the Minister of one case in my own constituency which I thought very tragic. I inspected one house—a pink-wash cottage on a hillside in Somerset in extraordinarily beautiful surroundings. The man and his wife who lived there were happy and had reared eight children in that cottage. It was their own home, and to them, after their own family, it mattered more than, perhaps, anything else in the world. The woman said to me: 'Look at my family. My grandmother lived here till she was 84. My children are healthy, and happy and strong. This home is the thing we care for and love, and now it is to be torn away from us. If a war comes, the first thing the country will ask of me is my son, and perhaps my second son, and I now ask of the country that it should not take away from me my home which could be made perfectly sound.' I inspected the cottage and agreed with her. Her thoughts, her fears, unfortunately, were justified. The war did come. We have taken from her not only her eldest son and her second son, but her two daughters who came after them. That house is typical of a very considerable number of houses—where the properties could be made substantially sound, although perhaps they are not absolutely ideal—perhaps there is not a damp course, perhaps the height of the rooms is not exactly seven feet. I ask that such houses which are reasonably habitable and in which people can be happy, should not be pulled down until we have a more adequate number of houses than we have to-day.

I beg further that there should be some revision of the better houses in these districts, and a subsidy should be granted for their repair as well as for the building of new houses. All this may not be within the recollection of the Minister, who was not in this House at the time, but I assure him that houses were condemned under that Act which would not have been condemned, had it not been for the fact that it was impossible to get a subsidy for a new house until an old house was condemned. I also beg the Minister to look into the question of the overhaul, revision, modernisation, and, if possible, unification of our model bylaws. I am quite certain that with the many modern methods of building which will be available to us after the war our old by-laws will not be applicable. At present, they are in a very chaotic condition and in need of overhaul, and it would be very helpful to local authorities, before they embark on the vast programme which is before them, to have more guidance and a better lead as to the best by-laws of the country.

I hope that this building will start at the earliest possible moment. I welcome the Minister's statement that he could not promise to build more than 100,000 houses after the war, for this reason: I would rather see a low number promised and see that number built, than have the promise of a vast number which could not be built. This problem of housing is causing such appalling suffering to our people at the present time that anyone who dared to make a promise on the question of housing, which could not be completely fulfilled, would be committing a crime. I know that to-day in London, houses which matter much to the people who live in them are being destroyed, but in some parts of the country, where there has not been the same

physical destruction through enemy action, houses are often so overcrowded and so neglected that they have gravely deteriorated in condition and are now far from desirable homes. When we give a subsidy for the repair of houses damaged by enemy action, would it not be possible to give a subsidy for the repair of houses which have fallen into disrepair, partly because it has been impossible to repair them during the war and partly because they have deteriorated more than they would have done in a normal five-year period, owing to the way in which they have had to be used?

A speech by Churchill was delayed by two hours in early August due to a bad-tempered protest when Manny Shinwell moved to shorten the recess to three weeks, as there was so much work to get through, housing and the dangers of the flying bomb in particular and the argument that Parliament could be recalled at any moment was insufficient. The motion was supported by Mavis and others and passed. On 4 August there was a brief respite from politics when she again joined the panel of the *Daily Express* Touring Brains Trust in Portsmouth with fellow Conservative MP Captain LD Gammans as a quizmaster followed by Winchester where she replied to the question, 'Why do men fall away in their attentions to their wives immediately they get married?' Mavis's view was that it was because they had been spoilt by their mothers.

September brought a return to the housing in question with the second reading of the Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Bill

The question of housing should never become a party question. It is one of such appalling urgency that the whole of this House should welcome any step which gives us promise that the question will be dealt with with as little delay as possible. I myself feel somewhat depressed when I hear that the Government recognise the urgency of getting on with temporary housing and yet realise that we had the First Reading of this Bill before the Summer Recess and have had to wait for six whole weeks before we can get the Second Reading or the Money Resolution, without which it will be quite impossible to lay down jigs and tools upon which the production of these temporary houses depends. I was one of those who voted against the long Parliamentary Recess for that very reason, I thought it essential that we should have had the Second Reading of this Bill concluded before we adjourned for the Summer Recess. It has quite certainly held up the provision of temporary housing for at least two months.

What I would like to ask the Government to-day is this. Statements have appeared in the Press in the last few days giving particulars of new permanent houses and the man-hours required to build them. Some of the man-hours for those houses are low. There was one house with steel girders, concrete slabs with insulation material between them and the inside walls. That is a very remarkable and good house of a completely permanent type, and I understand takes only 900 man-hours to erect. I do not know whether that is 900 hours on the site in addition to certain work in the factory or whether that figure represents the entire factory and site construction. I would like to ask how many man-hours a temporary house of the Portal or other such type, takes to erect. Although this House is seized of the great importance of producing houses and is willing to pass this Bill to provide temporary housing, if permanent houses could be produced in the same number of hours there is no Member who would not prefer permanent houses instead of temporary houses.

I feel that we are to-day discussing this matter under some difficulty, because since we adjourned for the Summer Recess permanent houses have been erected at Northolt, among them

this fine house put up in 900 man-hours. We have not been given the number of man-hours required to erect temporary houses and, therefore, because we welcome the Government's intentions to provide housing at the earliest possible moment, we applaud and approve temporary houses which none of us want if it has in the interval been found possible to produce permanent houses at comparable cost in as short a space of time. I would be grateful if we could have an answer on that point. I welcome the statement if I understood it aright—and I hope we shall all be clear on this—that no local authority will be compelled to have temporary houses if they consider that they can produce permanent houses as speedily, as that would meet my point, on the other hand, it is still the case that permanent houses cannot be produced in the same time as temporary houses, I hope local authorities will be compelled to have temporary houses of one type or another. I would like an assurance on another point, and that is that when temporary houses are to be erected, we shall not have undue delay because of the inter-Departmental arrangements between one Ministry and another. I feel some apprehension on this score, because I have not found that the Ministry of Health is always as speedy in dealing with housing matters as one could wish. In fact, I have long deplored the fact that housing should be under the Ministry of Health because that Ministry is already overloaded with other work. But I hope that if these houses are to come under the aegis of the Ministry of Health, we shall have speedier arrangements in regard to them than we did in regard to the agricultural cottages.

In my division some of these houses were erected, and when they were nearly completed the Frome Council wrote to the Ministry of Health with regard to the rents for them. They wrote on 22nd June last saying that the matter was urgent and asking the Minister if he could approve a rental of 10s. a week. They had no answer to that letter, so they wrote again on 1st August. They optimistically awaited a reply, too optimistically as it turned out, for no reply came. They therefore wrote again on 13th September, but a few days ago they reported at a council meeting that there was still no reply from the Ministry as to what rents were to be charged, and it is interesting to note that those cottages which could take tenants will be unable to be let because the Ministry had not yet answered letters from the council as to what rent should be charged.

I want to congratulate the Ministry of Works on the tremendous drive and energy they have shown in encouraging various forms of construction, the plans they have made, and the excellent interior fittings they have provided. I have nothing but praise to give to that Ministry, and I sincerely hope that their energy and drive will not be nullified by the perpetual delay we have to suffer when matters are in the hands of the Ministry of Health. In conclusion, I would like to repeat my request for an assurance that between now and the passing of the Bill if it is found that there is any type of satisfactory permanent house that can be produced in the same number of man-hours as temporary houses, then permanent houses will be substituted for the temporary houses.

Frank Bowles, Labour MP for Nuneaton initiated a debate on the future of civil aviation after the war and gave his views on what he believed to be, 'the really foolish obstacles mainly dictated by nationalism, which were put up by the governments of various states against other countries airlines flying over certain territories. When I flew to Kenya, I was not allowed to fly over Italy. I had to take a train from Paris to Brindisi, a journey of 36 hours, because the Italian Government exercised the right, recognised in 1929, saying that any country had the right to prohibit alien or foreign aircraft from flying over its territory. We also know perfectly well that when it came to a question of trying to fly over Turkey to India the Turkish Government prohibited that from happening, with the result that a serious diversion had to take place in this

very important airline to the Middle East and the Far East. Are we to continue to live in a world artificially broken up by language, and currency differences, with each country having national sovereignty of the air above its territory?

Mrs Tate: - (presumably in the mood for a bit of banter and obviously on top form, interrupted with, 'The hon. Member is assuming that we shall live in a world where national barriers and individual languages are to be wiped away. What has he had for lunch, to make him such a super-optimist?' Unfortunately, rather than coming back with a witty remark Frank Bowles took offence - 'I think the hon. Lady is one of the most rude women in the House. I have not left this Chamber since 11 a.m. I have had no lunch; I have been waiting to take part in this important debate. I am very surprised that the hon. Lady should have interrupted as she did. Perhaps I had better leave her to think over what she has said, and on this or some later occasion, she may decide to withdraw what I think was an offensive remark'.

Mrs Tate: I really did not mean to be offensive. I was really congratulating the hon. Member on his wonderfully optimistic nature. If he did it on no lunch, I congratulate him even more. I agree with every word that the hon. Member said about the vital importance of civil aviation to the world, I am interested in its importance to the Empire, and to this country, after the war. I disagree more wholeheartedly than I can possibly say with all his theories except one. I hope that the hon. Member will not consider me offensive if I, feeling as deeply on this subject as he does, criticise his ideas, which, I accept, he sincerely believes, though it passes my understanding to know why'.

[An HON. MEMBER: 'He had no lunch!.']

It is not only a question of his having had no lunch...

Mr Bowles (interrupting and still unable to find his sense of humour) appealed to the Deputy chairman,

'Is it in order, Mr Williams, to refer to whether an hon. Member is starving or not?

The Deputy-Chairman, 'I think we have had rather too much of this lunch talk'

Later in the debate another MP dared to object to Mrs Tate 'shrugging her shoulders' to which she replied, 'I did not do so but I would remind the hon. Member that this is a free country, and if I wanted to shrug my shoulders, I should do so, and I have far better shoulders to shrug than the hon. Member has. I am making a speech on a very technical subject, for which, I have not had time to prepare, and I hope you will not divert me from my argument, because you know very well how offensive I can be if I am diverted'.

24 October was the Matrimonial Causes (War Marriages) Bill to extend the jurisdiction of the High Court in England in divorce proceedings,

> The necessity for it arises, went the argument, from the number of marriages that have taken place between members of the forces from overseas, and British women in this country. Our courts entertain proceedings for divorce only if the permanent residence of the parties, is in this country. Take the hypothetical case of a soldier from overseas

who marries an English woman. They both intend, if the marriage is happy, to go back to his country as soon as they can after the war. Suppose he is unfaithful to her and gives her grounds for divorce. As the law stands, she cannot bring proceedings in this country. That might inflict a very great hardship on her and might also have the practical inconvenience that the evidence of his infidelity would be evidence available in this country but be very difficult to prove overseas. What, this Bill provides is that where a marriage has broken up before the parties have gone back to the country of the husband's home, although the domicile is not here, our courts can have jurisdiction to entertain the proceedings.

The Bill was to be restricted to marriages which had taken place after 3 September1939 and it was stated that already 20,000 British women had married servicemen from the dominions. Mavis outlined the grounds of her opposition in detail,

'When the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1937, was passed, we extended the grounds of divorce and made it possible for marriages to be dissolved for cruelty, desertion and incurable insanity in addition to infidelity. Until then infidelity had been the only ground and there was strong opposition in the country to extending the grounds for any reason whatsoever. There is a very strong case to be made out—whether or not anyone agrees with it—for the view that marriage is so sacred a sacrament, and an institution so vital to the fabric and health of society, that in no circumstances whatever should it be possible to terminate it. There is no case, however, for unjust divorce laws, and I maintain that if the present Bill goes through our divorce laws will not only be far more unjust in the future than they have been in the past but will also be absolutely chaotic. In the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1937, a provision was inserted which made it impossible for any marriage in this country to be broken on any grounds whatsoever until the parties had been married for three years, except in cases of very exceptional depravity or hardship.

What are we trying to do under this War Marriages Bill? We are wiping away that three-year provision, but are we wiping it away for everyone who marries during the course of the war? Not at all. If an English girl marries an Englishman or a Colonial, or a foreigner, who is domiciled in this country, she has to wait for three years before she can institute divorce proceedings, no matter what her marriage partner's conduct may be. I want Members to understand this point. Two Polish brothers might come over to this country in the early days of the war. Let us suppose that one of them starts a little business here and intends to make this country his home and becomes, therefore, domiciled in this country. Then he is called up under the National Service Acts and goes off to Poland. His wife never sees him again. He is unfaithful to her; he is cruel; he commits every crime which a husband can commit, but because he says that he started a business here, and is domiciled in this country, that girl cannot proceed to terminate her marriage for three years. Her sister may marry the Pole's brother, who may not have started a business in this country, and never became domiciled here. Simply because he is not domiciled in this country she, can start divorce proceedings within one week of the date of the marriage.

I realise that marriage in wartime is entered into in an emotional state of mind, and that is the reason which the Government give for bringing in this Bill. The Solicitor-General, in answer to my contention that there was no case for wiping away the three-year clause, said, that in these cases where marriage breaks down it is almost certain to break down early. I do ask in all

seriousness, why the emotional background to marriage is more emotional if you marry in war-time a man who is domiciled overseas, than if you marry a man who is domiciled in this country. You may marry a man who is domiciled in this country, but you may never have a chance of living with him in war-time. He may be moved overseas very shortly after the date of marriage.

I consider the whole Bill unjust because I think the Government should have dealt with the domicile of the woman. What I am arguing now is that they have no right whatever to sweep away the three-year clause for one section of women, for a certain length of time, and to retain it for another section of women for all time. At least let us show consistency and make some attempt at justice. Do not let us have marriage laws which are more difficult for girls who marry their own countrymen or men domiciled in their own country, than for women married to men domiciled overseas. This is a serious point. It is going to create appalling anomalies and appalling injustice. This Bill is being hurried through in a way which would not have been possible if greater consideration and greater publicity had been given to it. A Bill which, whether you like to admit it or not, does very little more than legalise adultery, provided it is committed with somebody domiciled outside these islands. Moreover, it penalises women who go to the country of their husbands' domicile in an effort to make a success of their marriages where they are in danger of it breaking down. I cannot support a measure which, no matter whether it does benefit a few hard cases or not, I consider to be unjust, immoral, badly drawn and a prostitution of justice. I therefore hope that the House will support me in refusing the Third Reading.

Despite such eloquent reasoning the Bill was passed.

At a meeting of the Conservative General Committee at Pitt House in Bath that November and despite her reservations, Mavis agreed to fight for the Frome Division again on condition that there was an adequate election fund and an efficient organisation in place by March 1. The recommendation was carried with enthusiasm. Meanwhile the Brains Trust Roadshow had pitched up in Hastings where she was asked her opinion as a magistrate, of cases being reported in the papers. She gave the opinion that the muckraking of Victorian days has a few if any parallels-in journalism today and that publicity for crime undoubtedly helps to reduce crime and that for technical offences against the multifarious orders and restrictions of modern times it may help save people from making some of the mistakes'.

Mavis presented Lady Astor with a bouquet of red roses as a tribute of affection and gratitude from constituents of all parties in the Sutton Division of Plymouth in recognition of her serving as a sitting MP for 25 years. Lady Astor said in response that, 'I came here to represent a women's point of view but the men of Plymouth backed me up. The pioneer women, who in those days fought that women should be enfranchised, were women of great courage and greater vision.' Lady Astor had decided not to contest the next election after 25 years in Parliament as the first woman to take her seat.

20. 1945 In The House and Frome

At a special meeting held in Bath in early January it was agreed that a formal meeting would be held to adopt Mrs Tate as the candidate for Frome on 31March. Mavis proposed a resolution

to the effect that housing was the most important thing on the home front and that it was necessary to get all restrictions removed as regards labour and materials and that this could be achieved in some measure by bringing about a uniformity of local bylaws throughout the country. The meeting was held in Bath because the association's offices at Weymouth Hall in Frome had been requisitioned by the War Office. Mr Hamilton Kerr had been looking after the interests of the Bath constituency when Mavis was unable to do as she was ill with the flu once more. The Combe Down branch of the party agreed to establish a fighting fund to ensure that she would be returned again at the next election adding that as an MP she was always at great pains to respond to enquiries and problems referred to her by all constituents regardless of their social position or politics and describing her as 'almost a non-party institution'.

Mavis asked the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin whether disabled women were being granted the same opportunities as men to enter and train in government rehabilitation centres and was told that arrangements for their vocational training were similar to those for men and that industrial rehabilitation facilities would be provided as the need arose. During a debate on the Representation of the People Bill she expressed her annoyance at a member who claimed that there was very little in the agricultural argument that elections should not come at harvest time and asked the hon Friend when he had his harvest that suggested that 'he tried to learn a bit about the countryside.'

By the end of January Frome Conservative Association had been reconstituted with a new party agent but the members were rather horrified that sometime previously she had claimed that 'they cannot possibly hope to hold the seat at the next election' and said that she always says this before elections to guard against complacency, 'Rest assured,' she said, 'I do hope to be asked to represent you at the next election.' Back in the House she was still receiving complaints from women employed in the Admiralty Office at Bath that they have to knit, read or sit and do nothing because the offices are so overstaffed and the work is so ill-organised. Mrs Tate, Mrs Cazalet Keir and some male MPs of all parties asked that in the best interests of the nation, the regulation automatically dismissing women on marriage from the civil service should be abolished.

A little light relief was afforded once more on the BBC's Brains Trust when in response to the question, Does climate effect character? Mrs Tate implied that the Scot's part in the building of the Empire was called more or less by accident of climate, it being so cold and barren in Scotland that they had fled to warmer climates and in the process had done a good deal of pioneering. The crusty old Scottish socialist Manny Shinwell countered this by saying that if the English bureaucracy had done more to develop industry within Scotland's borders they would never have left in the first place, climate or no climate!

In early February Mavis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he was aware of the inadequacy of the penalties able to be inflicted on persons who maltreat children entrusted to their care; and, in view of the indignation thus created whether he will consider revising the scale of penalties which it is possible to impose for various types of crime to bring them into line with modern social views and ethics. Herbert Morrison replied that under the existing law, a person convicted of ill-treating or neglecting a child is liable on summary conviction to six months' imprisonment or a fine of £25, or both, and on indictment to two years' imprisonment or a fine of £100, or both. 'Such complaints as reach me have been to the effect either that, where a mother's neglect is due to ignorance or lack of training,

imprisonment is an inappropriate sentence, or that, the court has not made full use of its existing powers and has imposed a sentence which is much below the maximum. I can find no ground for any alteration of the existing law, but I fully share the feelings of indignation which any deliberate maltreatment of children naturally and properly excites, and if in any such case magistrates fail to carry out their duty of imposing an appropriately deterrent sentence—while I have no power to intervene or to call them to book—I recognise that it is right that public attention should be called to the matter so that the magistrates may realise that their action is condemned by public opinion'. Mavis then asked if he was aware that, the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children had over 1,000 cases last year, many of which it was impossible to get reported in the press, owing to lack of space, and very many of which they consider were inadequately dealt with and if he would consider what steps should be taken to see that benches which do not deal adequately with these cases, should have this matter drawn to their attention.

The magazine *Punch* reported a light exchange in the House when Mavis wanted to know whether sisters in the P.M.R.A.F Nursing Service serving with S.E.A.C. received the same campaign pay as the W.A.A.F., A.T.S. and the W.R.N.S. 'Everyone listened eagerly for Sir Archibald Sinclair to reply with Handleian swiftness; T.A.I.I.T.N., but he rather let the standard of the thing down by a formal, 'The Answer Is In The Negative' which rather spoilt it all'.

Shortly after giving a 15-minute talk entitled ‘The Week in Parliament’ on the Home Service, Mavis was taken ill once more suffering from renal calculus (kidney stones) an extremely painful condition and was ordered to take complete rest. She left London for the country and cancelled all her engagements until Tuesday, 6 March. Her place was taken by Mrs Carpenter of the Salvation Army at a Foyles literary lunch at the Grosvenor House ballroom to discuss the place of women in the post-war world.

During a free vote in the House as to whether the family allowance of 5/- per child should be paid to the father or mother Mavis made the case that, 'there was no question that the payment should be made to the mother on the grounds that the housewife was the person who did the shopping, managed the affairs of the household, knew was best for the children and in normal cases cared for them. Still on the home front, Mavis was dismayed that wartime day nurseries wanted to continue after the war under the name of 'nursery schools' fearing that if they continued many schemes in place for the care of children in peacetime would not go forward and taking a rather extreme position, was quoted as saying that, 'you are poisoning the milk of the country by pasteurisation and now you're going to take away the children from their mothers'.

25 members of the Women's Land Army struck work at Newborough near Peterborough in March as a protest against Churchill's announcement that they were not to be included in the war gratuities scheme and requested facilities for training, rehabilitation, extra clothing coupons and the right to retain their badges. Mavis led the protest by MPs over the government's refusal and was backed by Lady Astor, Harold Nicholson and over 40 others, urging the government to reverse its decision.

Towards the end of the month Mrs Tate continued her fight for positive action on British aviation,

> I think I am the only member of my party who voted against the proposed continuance of the subsidy to Imperial Airways until 1953, because I wholly disapproved of the policy of the

one chosen instrument. It is indeed satisfactory to know that the government have at last caught up with me. Today I am unhappy because the same complacency with which the Government regarded their progress in civil aviation before the war, seems still to run through the White Paper. That is why I am grievously disturbed. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, in introducing the paper this afternoon, said 'It must be a matter of great satisfaction to the Minister for Civil Aviation that his paper has aroused so much interest.' I regard that as an almost tragic statement. We are passing into an entirely new age, the age of the air, and if British people are not interested in the future of British civil aviation, they have no realisation of the changing age nor any understanding of the opportunities they must seize, they are living in a world that is dead and gone.

I regret the very narrow aspect from which so many people seem to have regarded this problem to-day. Although it says that the policy of the chosen instrument has been given up, and we have instead three chosen instruments, I fear there will be little improvement if they are going to be more or less under one control. There still appear to loom the ossified brain and the dead, skinny hand of bureaucratic control in this scheme. There is really one main control if the Minister has such power over the three chosen instruments as is outlined in the White Paper, I regard it as a most fortunate thing that the paper has not received the paeans of praise from Members in this House that it met with in another place, because whatever view one takes, whatever policy one wishes to follow, it leaves a very great deal to be desired, and a very great deal open to criticism and to various interpretations. I would have preferred more or less the policy outlined by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Devonport (Mr Hore-Belisha). We should not altogether ignore the fact that although the White Paper has been received until to-day with praise in this country, it has also been received with hoots of joy in America. She has made no bones about her intention of capturing 70 to 80 per cent. of the traffic of the world air routes. If she regards this White Paper as so eminently satisfactory in helping to further her aims, I think it is worth our while taking a second look at it before we are certain that it will further the aims of this country.

When I was in America long ago, when Pan-American Airways was still in its infancy, they had a motto, 'Wings for Trade,' but to-day it is wings not only for trade, but for one country's prestige and influence in the world. That is why I was so appalled by the contribution made by the hon. Member for North Cumberland (Mr Roberts) when he said: 'What does it matter how we travel? Let us travel cheaply and uncomfortably in the early days after the war.' Does he really believe that that will enhance the prestige of British service or of his country among the nations of the world? Will that type of approach help us to capture trade?

Mr Roberts: I would ask the hon. Lady whether she prefers to travel very comfortably in American planes, or a little less comfortably in British planes?

Mrs Tate: I prefer to see Britain fly air routes, and I would like them to have the best machines in the world. If they cannot manufacture them themselves, at present, then until they can they should get them from anywhere they are able. But for Heaven's sake let Britain run efficient air lines. Had that been done before the war, the Government would not now be coming here with such flowery phrases as to what they are going to do; they would have a background of achievement. I ask hon. Members to look at page 4 of the White Paper which says: 'The trunk route from the United Kingdom to South America presents a new field for British civil aviation. It is one which our long and close relations with the States of that Continent make it essential that we should enter.' Memories are very short, but I remember the late Sir Philip Sassoon standing at that Box and giving a categorical promise that this country would be flying the South American route by the spring of 1938. I am not at all sure it was not the spring of 1937, but I want to be on the safe side. I remember getting up and pointing out that crocuses

were out in St. James's Park, and that English lambs were shivering in little English fields, which is often the only way one knows that spring has come in this country, but that there was not a sign of an aeroplane run by a British company flying across the South Atlantic and when 1939 came we still were paying, I think £37,000 is the very lowest sum, to French and German lines to carry our mails across the South Atlantic.

To-day the Government make the same promise, in what I consider the most impudent phrases, and expect us to greet this Paper with thankfulness, and to feel completely confident that the prestige and efficiency of British civil aviation are now assured. I, unhappily, cannot forget the past, and I cannot feel happy about the various disabilities which I find in this Paper. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Gorbals (Mr. Buchanan) that the railway companies have not given us an ideal railway service in the past. As for the statement of the hon. Member for West Lewisham (Mr. Brooke) that the lamentable catering arrangements on British railways were due to the fact that we had not had a co-ordinated transport service, what utter bunkum. The food on British railways and railway stations is a disgrace to civilisation. But it is typical of the British attitude to food. Certainly the hon. Member for North Cumberland, who wants to travel in discomfort, looks as if he takes no interest in food'.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady should not make personal references to Members.

Mrs Tate: I apologise; but I was only trying to refer to the hon. Member's very aesthetic and high-minded attitude, as shown in his speech praising lack of comfort. Personally, I admit that I think there are very few things which can give one so much pleasure three times a day, from the cradle to the grave, as food can do. [Laughter.] This is really no laughing matter. It is absolutely vital to the future interests of this country that we should progress in civil aviation. If I thought that the compromise was going to get wholehearted support and assure us of an immediate service and a real appreciation of the tremendous importance of this subject, I should feel happier. But I have listened to this Debate from beginning to end, and if this is complete unanimity and a hearty welcome to the spirit of compromise, it is the strangest I have ever met.

I hope that we are going to get the service at no distant date. Ministers were fond of referring to our safety record in the past, when we ran those extraordinary Heath Robinson machines across the Channel, that was the stock excuse the Government brought forward: 'Look at our safety record.' I am as anxious as anyone that air travel should be made safe. But people will travel by air whether it is, in its initial stages, safe or not. People travel on the roads, and there are few more dangerous methods of getting about than that. If we are to build up our foreign trade, Empire unity, Empire communications, our prestige, and our influence, we must give first-class service. I genuinely believe that our influence in the world is an influence for good and an influence for peace. To build up our influence we must have on our routes the best aeroplanes that can possibly be manufactured—and I agree that it will be many years before we can produce them, owing to a deplorable policy which was followed in the past. There was an excuse in the hour of great danger, when we decided that we would concentrate on fighter machines and that America would produce transport machines, but many of us protested at the time. I think it was a short-sighted view, just as I thought the Government's policy of a chosen instrument before the war was a short-sighted policy—as it proved to be. We must now have the best machines, and we must have really good service.

I hope, from the bottom of my heart, that the Government will appreciate the very important part that women could play in that service. For many years America has had women hostesses on her air-lines. Before the war I wrote and asked that Imperial Airways should have women hostesses.

Sir A Belt: At least, let us call them 'stewardesses.'

Mrs Tate: I am referring to America, and Americans call them 'hostesses.' The detail of the name we could doubtless change, to suit the hon. Member's predilection for 'stewardesses.'

On 24 March Mavis was unanimously adopted as the Conservative candidate for Frome at a packed meeting at Fortt's Restaurant in Milsom Street, Bath where she said that she did not believe that there was ever a time in our history when a general election was going to mean so much. It is going to be a very tough fight and that there was a large influx of fresh electors into the area whose views were not known. She had been asked to stand as an Independent more than once, she said, but did not think it in the interests of the country, she believed her party was furthering the interests of her constituency and the country as a whole and she would support it, 'it is an extraordinary constituency to represent. There are business's mining, agriculture, munitions, housing, water, roads, quarries, in fact everything except deep sea fishing and herrings. It is really too much for one human being to undertake but you have been so good, so extraordinary loyal and done so much to get to this association going again that if you asked me to contest I am certainly going to say YES!' As regards finance, Mr Scammell announced that they had £399 in the current account and £325 in a deposit account. It was estimated that the annual expenditure would be anything up to £1,500, there was also a 'very adequate' fund for fighting the election.

There was a praise for the speed and efficiency with which repairs have been carried out to bomb damaged property in London. Mavis said that the people of London were very satisfied and, 'in the borough in which I live, I have had my house damaged three times, but in no case was the damage sufficient to be reported, in view of the appalling damage which other people had suffered and in each case the repairs were done in an extremely short time'.

Frank Bowles MP for Nuneaton, who had crossed swords over aviation with Mavis before stated that,

Mr Bowles: I am making no general statement whatever, but there is a certain proportion of men among the pilots of Transport Command who are ex-bomber pilots. When they had been on bombing raids they did not have a co-pilot and they felt that they were able to get away quite safely from flying over Germany, through flak and so on. There is a tendency for that type of pilot not to feel the need for a co-pilot. A friend of mine flew back a week ago from Algiers to this country. He came as a passenger, and he landed at Marseilles on his way here. He said that the co-pilot was a blonde from South Africa.

[HON. MEMBERS: 'A what?!']

Mr Bowles: A blonde—a lady blonde. I am sure that neither the Minister nor any other hon. Member has any objection to blondes as such, but anybody with experience of flying would feel that the machine was in less competent hands, if a blonde was at the controls while the pilot was in the lavatory.

Mrs Tate: May I ask who the blonde was? Is the hon. Member suggesting that she could not fly?

Mr Bowles: No, there are hundreds of able women who can fly perfectly well. If the hon. Lady happens to be a blonde, she need not be so excited. There was only one pilot on board, and he was a boy of about 22 years of age. He was flying for 19 hours out of every 24. I can prove this fact. The pilot, is a human being and naturally wanted to go to the lavatory and in this case, the automatic pilot had failed. The pilot put his head in the cabin and asked: 'Are there any qualified pilots here to take over while I go into the toilet?'

On 17 April 1945 Mrs Tate attended the memorial service for the American president Franklin Delano Roosevelt at St Paul's Cathedral, he had died on the 12th at the age of 63 having been president since 1933.

There was outrage in the House when it emerged that a woman, Sybil Campbell was to be sworn in on 18 April as the newly appointed Metropolitan stipendiary magistrate at a salary of £2,000 per year, she had been called to the bar in 1922. Dr Russell Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what grounds he departed from precedent in appointing a woman to which Mr Herbert Morrison replied, 'Appointments as Metropolitan Police Court Magistrates are made by His Majesty on the recommendation of the Home Secretary, and it would be contrary to precedent to detail the reasons for any advice tendered to His Majesty. I can however say that I was, and am, satisfied that Miss Campbell possesses qualities which will make her a valuable addition to the Metropolitan Bench. A red rag to a bull of course as far as Mavis was concerned, 'Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise how very distressing any departure from the obsolete past must always be to the hon. Member who asks the question?' To which Dr Edith Summerskill added, 'Is my right hon. Friend aware, in view of the source of this question, that he has done the right thing?

Mr Morrison : I will try to draw comfort from what my hon. Friend says'.

On 14 April she addressed a meeting at Batheaston during which she explained that with the speed of technical development, projectiles such as rockets might before long be fired 1,000 at a time with deadly precision and so in the event of future trouble either a knockout blow would be administered in place of a declaration of war or at the very best, we just have to carry out any discussions whilst a destructive war was in progress.

Within days Mavis Tate was to leave the friendly banter of the House and go through the most horrific experience of her life.

21. Buchenwald: April 1945

On 19 April, eight days after the Buchenwald concentration camp was liberated by Allied forces, Prime Minister Winston Churchill stood before Parliament and delivered an urgent request. 'I received this morning an unofficial statement from General Eisenhower indicating that new discoveries are far more serious than what has been revealed up to now, Eisenhower urges me to send a group of MPs to his headquarters immediately, so that they can see these atrocities with their own eyes. I have decided that a parliamentary delegation comprised of eight members of the House of Commons and two members of the House of Lords should depart immediately... the goal of this visit is to discover the truth and an account of their investigations will be published as a white paper'. Churchill was surprised at the number of

members volunteering to go considering the revolting nature of the enquiry, there were so many that places had to be balloted for.

The hastily arranged delegation left the following day the Speaker having selected eight names from 150 MPs of all parties who had put their names forward. One of those chosen, Alexander Sloan, MP for Ayr and Bute collapsed with suspected food poisoning in the House just before delegation set off and his place was taken by Sidney Sylverman who had only about 20 minutes to get himself ready. Mavis explained before leaving that, 'If women ask for equality of opportunity, they must give equality of service, it is most important that quite impartial observers with critical minds shall see these things for themselves, she should at least be able to stand seeing the things that other women have had to endure'.

The delegation consisted of:

Lord Stanhope, 1880-1967 Leader of the delegation 7th Earl and Conservative peer. Served in the Grenadier Guards during the Boer War. Entered the Lords in 1905.

Lord Christopher Addison, 1869-1951 Labour peer and doctor, He was a prominent anatomist, and perhaps the most eminent doctor ever to enter the Commons. He was a leader in issues of health, wartime munitions, housing and agriculture. Although not highly visible, he played a major role in the post-war governments that followed both world wars. Addison worked hard to promote the National Insurance scheme in 1911. Lloyd George made him the first Minister of Health during the wartime coalition, and Addison started up the first programme of publicly funded local authority housing schemes with his Housing Act of 1919. He and Lloyd George fell out and he joined the Labour Party. He was 76 when he made the trip and it was the first time he had flown.

Sir Henry Morris-Jones, 1884-1972 a Welsh doctor and Liberal MP, whose interests included public health and agriculture. He spent a brief period as an Independent during 1942 but re-joined the party the following year.

Sir Graham White, 1880-1965 Liberal MP Birkenhead lost his seat in 1945 and did not stand again. He was a passionate internationalist and in 1923 and was elected a Member of the Executive Committee, of the League of Nations Union, serving until 1924.

Sir Archibald Southby,1886-1969. Naval officer and Conservative MP for Epsom, and the only Conservative of the group to keep his seat in 1945, but he did so during an extended convalescence of many months, having suffered from influenza and ‘near-jaundice’ from April 1945, which was attributed to his visit to Buchenwald. According to one report he had almost lost the power to walk or talk, a state which continued for almost 20 years. He resigned his seat in 1947 and died 1969.

Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Wickham, 1890-1957 Conservative MP for Taunton. Served in the British Indian Army. Lost his seat in the Labour landslide of 1945 and did not stand again.

Ness Edwards,1897-1968 Welsh Labour, MP for Caerphilly until his death. In 1989 his daughter, now Baroness Golding, recalled in a Parliamentary debate on War Crimes how, on returning from the Buchenwald visit, her father did not sleep for weeks and had nightmares for years. Ness (Onesimus) Edwards was a former miner who first went down the pit at the age of 13. A conscientious objector during WW1 he spent time in Wormwood Scrubs prison for his beliefs. After the Munich Agreement in 1938 he helped anti-Nazi Czech miners escape from the Sudetenland. In 1939 he became MP for Caerphilly and in 1945 he represented British miners at the memorial to the murdered at Lidice. He remained the MP for Caerphilly until his death in 1968. When Edwards left the concentration camp, he took with him a grim souvenir - a lampshade made from human skin. It was intended to remind him of man's inhumanity to man. The visit had been traumatic and for many years he continued to have nightmares about Buchenwald. It is said - that when he attended election meetings, he would sometimes take the Nazi lampshade with him Amazingly the lampshade was kept at St Martin's Comprehensive School in Caerphilly and may still be there.

Sydney Silverman, 1895-1968 Labour MP for Nelson and Colne. had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector during the First World War and was an indefatigable campaigner for penal reform. He was described in the report as ‘a member of the Jewish race'. One of the founders of CND and an opponent of capital punishment.

Tom Driberg 1905-1976 Independent, MP Maldon 1942-1945 and Labour member for Barking 1959-1974 He was included to use his journalistic skills to write the report for the British Parliament, last surviving member of the party. A homosexual, member of the Communist Party, Anglican churchgoer and man behind the William Hickey gossip column in the *Daily Express*.

The Delegation Buchenwald 1945

The party was flown out in two RAF Transport Command aircraft after leaving by car from Westminster. Escorted by a US Army commander, they inspected the camp, saw the piles of

dead and talked to surviving inmates. Two days later on the 22nd the delegation returned to London from Germany flown by Flying Officer Colin Bone from Horsham in Sussex in a Dakota. He returned with a ceremonial dagger from an SS guard, an officer's sword and a German steel helmet given to him near Buchenwald camp.

Lt Colonel Wickham contradicted reports that they had only spent an hour at the camp, and that the time allotted had been far too short, they had spent several hours there, he said and would have preferred several weeks to examine its horrors fully but they had gained a clear idea of the terrible conditions. Mavis who had spoken to a number of victims in German said that they had seen enough to enable them to issue a White Paper. 'I regret that there was not time to see Belsen Camp, but it was a long way away. You appreciate however, that when certain horrors have taken place there is nothing to be gained by going on and seeing a repetition of horrors.' She told the interviewer that it was 'the most sadistic cruel and hellish thing' and others described it as ‘unbelievably terrible every bit as bad as we've heard’ and declared herself to be very appreciative of the way the American army had looked after the delegation and the trouble they have taken on their behalf. The group had agreed not to make any further pronouncements until they had made their report to the Speaker. The *Daily Mirror* recommended that 'thousands should visit Buchenwald and suggested that Captain Ramsay MP and other internees under 18b should be among those included.

THE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION PHOTOGRAPHED AT A HOME COUNTIES AIRPORT BESIDE THE AEROPLANE IN WHICH THEY TRAVELLED TO VISIT THE ATROCITIES AT BUCHENWALD.

The Parliamentary delegation of ten, which visited Buchenwald concentration camp at the invitation of General Eisenhower, has now returned to England. In spite of the brevity of their visit, they saw and heard enough to convince them of the utter depravity of all tainted with Nazism. (L. to r.) Mr. S. S. Silverman (Lab.), Mr. Ness Edwards (Lab.), Sir H. Morris-Jones (Nat. Lib.), Colonel Wickham (Cons.), Lord Addison (Lab.), Mr. T. Driberg (Ind.), Lord Stanhope (Cons.), Sir A. Southby (Cons.), Mr. Graham White (Lib.), Mrs. Mavis Tate (Cons.).

The Delegation Return

Despite what must have been an incredibly gruelling time Mavis was back in the House on the 26th with one newspaper proclaiming on the 30th that she had returned from Germany in

excellent form; the truth was rather different as we shall see. The Pathe Newsreel of the delegations visit to Buchenwald was released on 30 April with Mavis, both introducing it and giving the voice-over urging viewers: ‘Do believe me when I tell you that the reality was indescribably worse than these pictures.’

Mavis was interviewed by the *London Evening News* during the first week of May and gave her views on German women, 'There is literally no horror which one cannot credit. What shocked me most is the faces of so many ordinary German housewives of Weimar. Hard, hating, aggressive truculent and evil. I have never seen anything approaching them until I returned home and saw photographs of the women guards at Belsen Camp. They were the same faces on different women. When people speak of re-educating Germany, I cannot help wondering just how they would re-educate women of that type, between the ages of 25 and 45 –who are not without influence in their communities. Try by all means, but do not risk permitting conditions under which war is possible should you fail. The Germans are defeated in war, but from the little I saw I am very certain that there are in no way repentant in spirit.'

By 9 May most wartime defence regulations had been revoked including 18b which covered the internment of those with German sympathies. Back in the Commons, Mavis asked Herbert Morrison about Ernst Hanfstaengl who had held an extremely important position in Berlin. He replied that he did not think he was detained under 18b as an enemy alien. He would be detained under Royal Prerogative which continues. Later she asked how long it is intended that Herr Hanfstaengl should remain in the internment camp in the Isle of Man; what policy will be pursued with regard to him as one of the high officials of the Nazi hierarchy for three or four years after Hitler's accession to power; and whether he was regarded as a war criminal. The reply came from Sir Donald Somervell, 'He will remain in internment until he can be repatriated. I am informed that he is not on the British list of war criminals nor on the list published by the United Nations' War Crimes Commission'. Putzi had been handed over to the Americans in 1942 where he helped President Roosevelt's project to compile information on the Nazi leaders before being returned to Britain where he was interred until the end of the war after which he was repatriated to Germany, he died in Munich in 1975.

On Friday10 May Mavis was in the House again supporting a motion that family allowance be paid to the mother rather than the man and on Sunday13 May she gave an account of her visit to Buchenwald at a public meeting held at the Charlton Cinema, Keynsham at which the audience was described as, ‘shocked beyond words’. She asked them to imagine Keynsham's pre-war population of between 5,000 and 6,000 and then try to realise that there were 120,000 at Buchenwald and 3,000 guards. 51,000 people died at the camp, and she received loud applause when replying to a question from the audience about camp guards, she replied that the right thing to do is to give them summary court-martial and then shoot them.

It seemed that her health was fine until a report appeared in the *Bath Chronicle* on 26 May reporting that she was suffering from throat trouble and the complete loss of her voice. Her doctor described her as suffering from complete exhaustion and said that she had been resting for the past week. When she read a report that she was suffering from severe mental strain she immediately called a press conference at her bedside to deny the statement. She told reporters that she was suffering from the 'Buchenwald Bug' and not encephalitis as had been claimed. 'I still do not know what was wrong with me and doctors were equally mystified,' she said later.

On Sunday 27th she gave a speech on Buchenwald to around 1,200 people at the Grand Cinema in Frome, the audience was so large that 200 to 300 people had to hear it relayed outside. By 1 June it was reported that she had fully recovered from her throat problem, but it was reported in *The Times* on 9 June that she was once again ill with a septic throat.

22. The Great Defeat of 1945

Mavis started her post-war campaign for Frome confident of victory, expressing great faith in Churchill and fully believing that the British people would show their appreciation of his wartime leadership. She asked her supporters to agree with her wish to have new campaign colours of blue and white instead of the red, white and blue used in the past as she considered it unseemly that one candidate should take the national colours for electioneering purposes. Her campaign was to begin in earnest on 16 June following the dissolution of Parliament on the 14th and the constituency now had 17,000 more constituents than the last election in 1937 with the possibility of a three-cornered fight as the Liberal Party was considering its position and the Labour Party was putting up Mr WJ Farthing as their candidate. At the very start of her campaign, she received some support from a surprising direction. An article in the *Daily Mirror* said that,

> They believed that there are some people in politics whose merit rises above all party considerations -people of character, courage, energy or intellect whose presence in Parliament would help to ensure that the strength and ability of the nation are represented there. Mrs Mavis Tate is a Tory who has many friends and the right kind of enemies. Her 1935 election cost her £1100 and for the first three years after she paid £400 per annum to the local Tory Association. Mrs Tate decided that Parliament should not be a closed shop for the wealthy and became the leader of a campaign within the Tory party to stop the racket of selling seats. The campaign did not succeed. In many constituencies the public interest is still put up for private auction but Mrs Tate did make Frome Tories pay for their politics. Mrs Tate has always been a vigorous supporter of the equal pay for equal work and similar good causes.

Not every publication was quite so enthusiastic some comments in the press speculating on posts for Churchill's caretaker government formed during May because the parties could not agree on whether it should continue after the defeat of Japan, decided that there was room for one woman but when it came to Mrs Tate its thoughts were that 'perhaps one visualises her more as a brilliant solo critic then the custodian of a ministry…'

The *Bath Chronicle* announced on 9 June that she had been seriously ill over the weekend with a throat infection described as an 'acute streptococcal condition' which had been developing for some weeks. She was treated with sulphanilamide and was rapidly improving and expecting to start her election fight on 15 June but had been obliged to cancel all engagements prior to that date. Arthur Duckworth MP for Shrewsbury and son of Major Duckworth of Orchardleigh took over move because recession regretting that there needed to be an election at all as there was an awful amount of work which could be done without dividing along party lines, and asked if it 'was seriously suggested that if the Socialist Party obtained a majority that this was the right moment for introducing vast wild schemes of

socialisation, nationalisation or revolutionary changes in our social and ethical at life which could only lead to chaos and disaster'. A small note in the *Bath Chronicle* announced that her address will be 'The Bungalow, Portway Hotel, Frome' from 15 June until 7 July. She must have missed her country retreat at Greenleaves which had been sold by the freeholders in April but whether this was from choice, financial pressures or just the expiration of her lease we do not know.

Women in Politics

Since women have had the vote we have had a great increase in Social legislation affecting the home, health, child welfare and family life. Women make their presence felt in the House of Commons. When interested in public affairs, they bring to them special knowledge of social conditions, and a great longing for Peace and Stability.
Please use your vote.

Mavis Tate.

JULY 5

REMEMBER THE DATE

VOTE FOR TATE

What Others Say about Mrs. Tate

Daily Mirror, 2.6.45.
"*People above Parties*. The *Daily Mirror* believes that there are some people in politics whose merit rises above all Party considerations—people of character, courage, energy or intellect, whose presence in Parliament would help to ensure that the strength and ability of the nation are represented there. No. 1, *Mrs. Mavis Tate*."

Mr. J. HENDERSON STEWART, Liberal National M.P., writing in the *Queen*, 11.2.37.
"Mrs. Tate is a remarkable woman. She is the exception in that her interests are not mainly confined to the House."

ATTICUS, in the *Sunday Times*, 28.3.37.
"She is a left-wing Tory, which means that she sympathises with the people. She is an authority on health and an enthusiast, without being an expert, on Agriculture. An earnest, hard-working M.P. who believes what she believes without compromise."

The Times, 8.4.43.
When after 3 years' work Mrs. Tate was successful in getting women equally compensated with men for war injuries.
"Mrs. Tate receives the most desirable reward for an advocacy of equal justice which was as pertinacious as it was logically unanswerable. Mrs. Tate has gained the greatest success ever credited to a woman M.P."

Punch, 14.2.45.
"Observant onlookers have learned that when she bears a dossier Mrs. Tate means business. And when she means business—somebody—usually a Minister—had better look out."

SPECIAL MESSAGE

MR. CHURCHILL APPEALS TO YOU

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

On the 3rd September, 1939, we began an heroic crusade for Right and Freedom. Our hard task is not yet finished. We have still to beat the Japanese; to work with our Allies to ensure that victory leads to a durable peace; to put this land of ours on its feet again.

Believing that these tasks call for continued national unity, I invited the leaders of the Labour and Opposition Liberal Parties to stay in the Government to help us finish the job. They refused.

Men of goodwill of other parties, and of no party, have accepted the invitation. Together we shall tackle the pressing military and political problems that lie ahead.

When those problems have been solved, and Britain is a going concern again, there will be plenty of time to argue about whether we want to discard our whole system of society in favour of strange ideas which are quite out of sympathy with our hard-won individual liberty.

Mrs. Tate is fully pledged to support me. I ask you to give her your vote.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

15th June, 1945.

Printed and Published by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

GENERAL ELECTION 1945

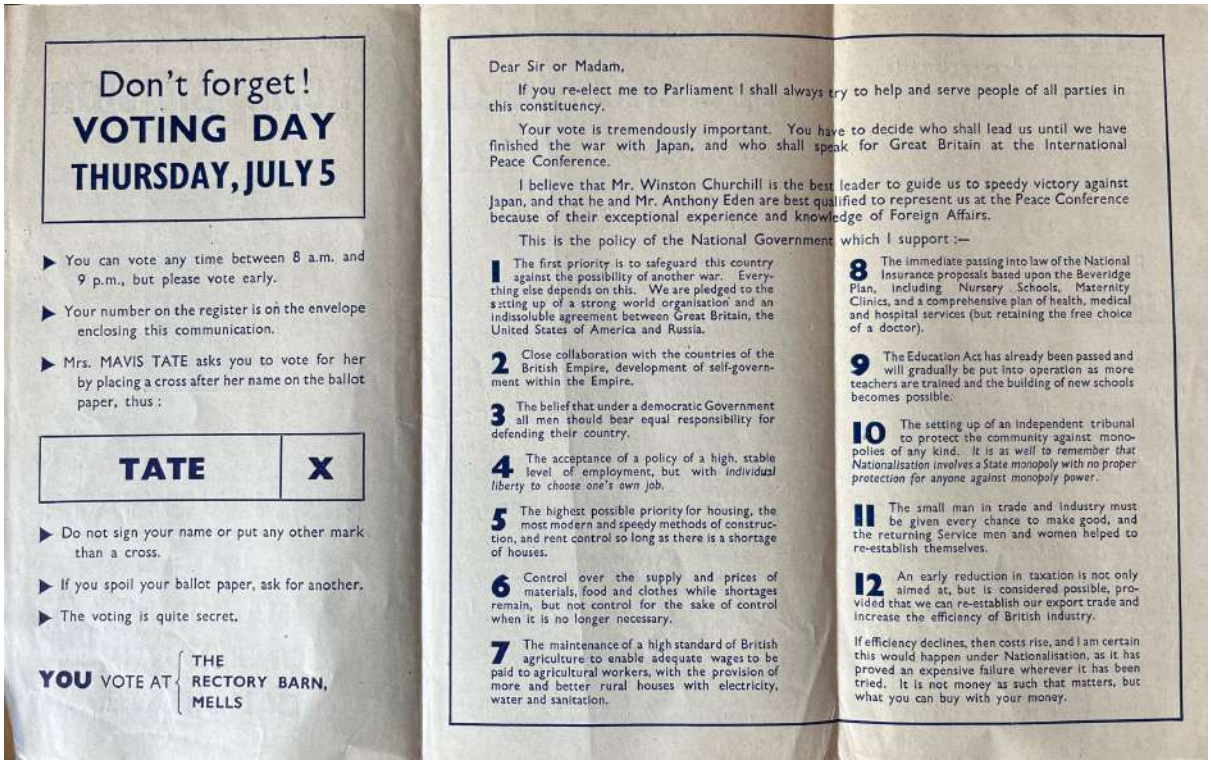
FROME DIVISION

from

Mrs. MAVIS TATE

THE NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE

Election Leaflet 5 July 1945



Don't forget!
VOTING DAY
THURSDAY, JULY 5

- You can vote any time between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m., but please vote early.
- Your number on the register is on the envelope enclosing this communication.
- Mrs. MAVIS TATE asks you to vote for her by placing a cross after her name on the ballot paper, thus :

TATE	X

- Do not sign your name or put any other mark than a cross.
- If you spoil your ballot paper, ask for another.
- The voting is quite secret.

YOU VOTE AT { THE RECTORY BARN, MELLS

Dear Sir or Madam,

If you re-elect me to Parliament I shall always try to help and serve people of all parties in this constituency.

Your vote is tremendously important. You have to decide who shall lead us until we have finished the war with Japan, and who shall speak for Great Britain at the International Peace Conference.

I believe that Mr. Winston Churchill is the best leader to guide us to speedy victory against Japan, and that he and Mr. Anthony Eden are best qualified to represent us at the Peace Conference because of their exceptional experience and knowledge of Foreign Affairs.

This is the policy of the National Government which I support :—

1 The first priority is to safeguard this country against the possibility of another war. Everything else depends on this. We are pledged to the setting up of a strong world organisation and an indissoluble agreement between Great Britain, the United States of America and Russia.

2 Close collaboration with the countries of the British Empire, development of self-government within the Empire.

3 The belief that under a democratic Government all men should bear equal responsibility for defending their country.

4 The acceptance of a policy of a high, stable level of employment, but with *individual liberty to choose one's own job.*

5 The highest possible priority for housing, the most modern and speedy methods of construction, and rent control so long as there is a shortage of houses.

6 Control over the supply and prices of materials, food and clothes while shortages remain, but not control for the sake of control when it is no longer necessary.

7 The maintenance of a high standard of British agriculture to enable adequate wages to be paid to agricultural workers, with the provision of more and better rural houses with electricity, water and sanitation.

8 The immediate passing into law of the National Insurance proposals based upon the Beveridge Plan, including Nursery Schools, Maternity Clinics, and a comprehensive plan of health, medical and hospital services (but retaining the free choice of a doctor).

9 The Education Act has already been passed and will gradually be put into operation as more teachers are trained and the building of new schools becomes possible.

10 The setting up of an independent tribunal to protect the community against monopolies of any kind. *It is as well to remember that Nationalisation involves a State monopoly with no proper protection for anyone against monopoly power.*

11 The small man in trade and industry must be given every chance to make good, and the returning Service men and women helped to re-establish themselves.

12 An early reduction in taxation is not only aimed at, but is considered possible, provided that we can re-establish our export trade and increase the efficiency of British industry.

If efficiency declines, then costs rise, and I am certain this would happen under Nationalisation, as it has proved an expensive failure wherever it has been tried. It is not money as such that matters, but what you can buy with your money.

Election Leaflet 5 July 1945

Soon back on the campaign trail, on 18 June she gave a rousing election speech at a crowded meeting in Midsomer Norton to celebrate her official adoption for the Frome Division. She said how much she appreciated being chosen and that in the past ten years, 'we have got to know one another, united by common aims and bonds of friendship and trust' she went on to stress the importance of international cooperation with America, Russia and France and expressed her loyalty to Churchill finishing with, 'We are on the threshold of an age which can be a golden age. In the war we have learned the magnificent use that can be made of machinery with a vast increase of productive capacity. I want shorter working hours and higher wages, but a greater production per working hour this is the only way you can go forward and produce for your people the things that they need, and you have promised them'.

In her ten years representing Frome she had made 96 speeches in the House and in the last six years she had asked over 400 questions and dealt with more than 5,000 individual cases for her constituents. The *Somerset Standard* for 22 June ran a full list of her many accomplishments both in the House of Commons and in her constituency while introducing the Labour Party candidate Walter Farthing a staunch and lifelong trade unionist who had once been a mayor of Bridgwater and a member of Bridgwater Borough Council since 1929 now aged 58. A seasoned political activist but sporting a style of moustache that one would have assumed to have fallen from fashion sometime before….

Naturally, the election's campaigning was focused on the country's post-war future. Churchill and the Conservative party sought to use their wartime popularity as part of the campaign to hold onto power after the wartime coalition which had been in place since 1940 had run its course. Churchill's outstanding performance in leading the country during the war was undoubted but would his abilities extend to the domestic issues facing an exhausted country? Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party, and Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition was seen as a competent leader by the electorate, particularly those who feared a return to the unemployment of the 'Hungry 30s'. As the election date neared opinion polls showed strong approval ratings for Churchill, but Labour gradually gained support as the war concluded.

The general election took place on 5 July, but the counting of the votes was delayed until the 26th to allow time for overseas votes to be collected. The result for the Frome Division was announced outside the Grand Cinema after a wait of nearly two hours. After the counting had been completed at Oakfield School it emerged that the poll was the heaviest on record for the district with some claiming a 90% turnout. Whereas Labour support was strong in the mining district the bulk of the rural vote had gone to Mrs Tate; other factors to be taken into consideration were changes to the geographical division, a large increase in the voting population, and the narrowness of her majority last time. Two prominent liberals had written to the local paper asking their members not to vote for Mrs Tate as her views were, 'not in harmony with liberalism' and advised that their best option would be to abstain, although this was not official party policy.

The result was a landslide victory for the Labour Party nationwide which was in line with many opinion polls but nonetheless Mavis expressed her 'great disappointment' at having lost her seat to Walter Farthing by 5,507 votes, a swing to Labour of 6.8%. Farthing declared himself to be 'amazed at the magnificent result' and was full of praise for the way in which Mrs Tate had run her campaign and all that she had achieved over the previous ten years. The Tories lost 182 seats throughout the country and Clement Attlee become Prime Minister. The Beveridge Report, which outlined the principles of the 'welfare state' had been published in 1942, was extremely popular, and eagerly adopted by the Labour Party, copies of its findings were widely purchased and although the Conservatives accepted many of its principles Labour offered a new comprehensive welfare policy, reflecting a consensus that social change was needed. The Conservatives were not willing to make the concessions that Labour proposed. The electorate had had enough of, 'blood sweat and tears' and turned towards the experiment of socialism with its promised golden age of a classless and cooperative society; their manifesto vowed nationalisation, economic planning, full employment, a National Health Service, and a system of social security for all. Mavis had won the 1935 by only 994 votes against P Mackay of the Labour Party at which time the electorate had stood at 68,849. After ten years of dedication, hard work, ill health and exhaustion often pursuing policies more progressive than those offered by the socialists she must have felt utterly betrayed. She was swept aside in a nationwide rejection of her party and maybe those who suggested that she should stand as an independent hadn't given such bad advice after all. Details of election expenses were published in the press. Farthing's personal expenditure had come to £17 with the party paying £915; Mavis's investment had come to £40 with the local conservative association paying £981.

Whatever her private thoughts, days later she opened Keynsham Horse and Gymkhana in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund and presented the prizes in the children's fancy dress competition at Whitchurch Vicarage in Bristol. How she occupied her time during the autumn days is not recorded but on 15 December she addressed the War Agricultural Executive Committee meeting in Thornbury.

Before long, her health let her down again and on the 30th it was reported in the *Sunday Post* that she had been in a Queen's Gate nursing home for about a week and had been ill in varying degrees for the past four months. 'I had a most virulent sore throat when I came back from Buchenwald, but I went out a day or two later to fight my election. About six weeks after that I began to have temperatures and felt cold whenever I got up. It got steadily worse. Suddenly I was taken very ill indeed and they brought me here. I've been dreadfully ill in the last few days'. Reports indicate that she is suffering from mild encephalitis also known as sleeping sickness an inflammation of the brain thought to be the result of germs picked up at Buchenwald. It was hoped that she would be fully recovered within a month. Another member of the party Sir Archibald Southby (Conservative MP for Epsom) was also in a London nursing home with a possible liver infection which has affected his legs and been aggravated by the strain of his election campaign.

23 1946: In Opposition

By now returned to London and largely out of the political limelight and despite her previous misgivings about, 'women's' days, she attended the International Women's Day celebrations at Birmingham Town Hall. The event was celebrated in 40 English towns and many other countries. Supporting Churchill's suggestion of an Anglo-American union, she said that she believed that unless the English-speaking peoples were prepared to create a government for foreign policy amongst themselves in which every democratic state could join, we should not have a United Nations. It had to begin with a nucleus to cover people all over the world who should have the same opportunities of individual development. It soon became obvious that despite her defeat in Frome she no intention of giving up politics and her appearances on the *Daily Express* Touring Brains Trust were becoming more regular. On 22 February she appeared at the Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells with Commander A B Campbell and the philosopher CEM Joad.

On 20 March 1946 Mavis was officially re-adopted as Conservative candidate for Frome by a unanimous vote at the annual meeting of the Frome Conservative Association she will be staying with Captain AE Chard at his Merfield House residence in Rode when in the area. She said that after the last election that she had made up her mind that, 'Nothing in the wide world would ever induce me to fight Frome or any other constituency again.' the truth is, she laughed, 'I'm not really a politician. Politics have been forced upon me.' She said that her acceptance depended upon two conditions,

1. The Association should be kept and maintained as a really effective organisation throughout the division.

2. She would not let her name go forward for any by-election or seek to be the candidate in any other constituency for three years, but she must first be allowed a holiday after her illness. She would then do her utmost to ensure that the seat was recaptured for the Conservative Party.

Her candidature was thoroughly endorsed by Mr Arthur Duckworth former MP for Shrewsbury who had a long political and personal friendship with her, he said that 'I have a tremendous admiration for the fight she put up, I have never seen a stouter fighter and I think that her performance was very remarkable against great odds. Frome had never had a better MP, and her reputation was based on her tremendous vitality, encourage, and pertinacity she was no respecter of persons and always voted according to her convictions'. This view was endorsed by Squadron Leader Christopher Hollis MP of Mells. The next election could be held at any time before 1950 and was probably some way off but there was obviously much preparation to be done.

On 8 April she made the last of 18 broadcasts on the BBC Brains Trust at 3.45pm on the Home Service this time in the company of Sir George Dyson and Labour MP Hugh Gaitskell but continued to tour her with the *Daily Express* roadshow appearing at the Town Hall, Cheltenham in early May and at the Central Hall, Coventry where when asked which famous person she would most like to meet Mrs Tate replied, 'General Smutts'. The team agreed on the desirability of a national sweepstake but disagreed on the issue of greater state control with Dr Joad and RHS Crossman MP being in favour and Mavis and industrialist SJ McAdden being against.

Commenting upon her health Mavis stated that 'By a miracle I am fit again. I still do not know what was wrong with me and doctors were equally mystified. Sir Archibald Southby, suffered from the same illness and a Dutch judge who was with us died.' It was only with the greatest difficulty that she was able to carry through her strenuous campaign at the last election and when she was last at Bath a month ago staying at Sheriffs Hotel she told the manageress that she had had the best night's sleep she had experienced since her German visit.

In May she expressed her outrage at another affront to British industry. Tor Hosiery Mills of Matlock had come up with a unique design for silk stockings made to look like lace and particularly suitable for wear with toeless and heelless sandals. Despite this wonderful British innovation, the Board of Trade has declined to increase the supply of silk that would make the item commercially viable. An outraged Mavis complained that, 'The women of Italy, a defeated country, can buy them in quantity at 7/6d a pair'. The Government has considerable silk stocks but because it is charging the manufacturers 63/- a pound for raw silk as against the pre-war price of 10/- to 12/- and imposing on home sales and purchase tax of 100% all silk goods are forced into luxury class.'

She was asked to introduce the first broadcast of a programme for the West of England BBC Home Service called, 'In the Gramophone Library' first planned for ~~last~~ the previous December, but two days before the event she was taken ill. Now recovered, she was able to present her choice of gramophone records but unfortunately the list does not survive. In June she spoke at the Conservative Women's conference in London saying that steps taken by the government to deal with the food prices were, 'inadequate, ill- advised and tardy.' The theme was continued in July when a 'Housewives League' meeting at Central Hall Westminster, was attended by 1,500 housewives from all parts of the country. Despite assurances from the platform that the League was non-political and not Tory sponsored, speeches were packed with attacks on the

Labour government. A resolution demanded that bread rationing and further food cuts be discontinued and that a public enquiry into the country's food situation should be instituted. Mavis told the meeting, 'I want to see some really constructive action and policy that will make bread rationing impossible. Merely signing petitions is not going to affect anything. Protests in the House of Commons will get you nowhere while there is the present large majority, but it won't stop at bread rationing, if you have bread rationing, you're not only going to have exhausted women and additional queues but you are quite certainly soon going to have potato rationing.' She tried to get the League to change its name to the Family League and take in wider issues than rationing. The meeting ended in confusion with speeches in favour of rationing being shouted down with cries of, 'Throw them out!'

Still on the subject of family life, she addressed the surviving members of the suffragette movement at St Ermins Restaurant, Westminster. Speaking of Parliament, she said, 'Women have now reached the position of judges. Women are just beginning to creep into the diplomatic and consular services, and everyone knows there is no service for which they are better qualified. The interests of men and women if they are really understood, are identical. Anything that strikes at the status and happiness of the housewife strikes an~~d~~ indelible blow at the health of the family and national stability.' She continued that food was one of the main pleasures of mankind. Any further restrictions on food will be striking at home life and the welfare of the family. If a man does well, he is generally ennobled. If he becomes a minister and does badly, he is moved into the House of Lords. Unless and until you have women going into the House of Lords on the same terms as men you will not have equality. She lamented the fact that the idea of a woman Prime Minister would be against the wishes of the bulk of the public. Later, in the balcony room of the restaurant, experiences of the early days of women's suffrage movement were exchanged. Minnie Baldock an old campaigner recalled the time when she and two others hid in the organ loft at the Colston Hall Bristol for the whole night to evade stewards searching for them. Medals were in abundance including those awarded to women who went on hunger strike for over 20 days whilst in prison. A small party of suffragettes among whom was Mrs Macloughan known as Mrs M of Harley Street who was 92, placed flowers at the foot of Mrs Pankhurst's statue in Victoria Tower Gardens.

It seemed as though things were returning to normal for Mavis after the disasters of the last election. Aside from her work in Frome, she had re-joined the Willesden Conservative Association and resumed her seat on the Willesden bench of JPs. Saturday 27 July saw the first Rode & District Gymkhana and Pony Races held at Rode Hill and opened by its president Mrs Mavis Tate who presented the cups after the show including the 'Mavis Tate silver bowl' which was awarded to a Mr Morgan for his pony named Joan. The event was an outstanding success with more than 2,000 people attending and the profits were distributed between the British Legion, Frome Victoria Hospital, and the Frome and District Conservative Association. Mid-August saw Bristol's ten-day farm-week exhibition at Ashton Court which opened on Women's Day and at which Mavis gave a talk but her ill-health returned, and she was unable to attend a fete arranged by thnswick Conservative Association in Bath due to an attack of influenza, Arthur Duckworth deputised. September was a busy month, she was invited by Miss Le Gros of the former silk manufacturing family to address a gathering at North Hill House in Frome and was back on form attacking the government, 'Which has no policy which has not been forced upon them too late in the day. We have a great empire-the greatest in the world-a force

which can be a magnificent force for peace and prosperity. Today, everything that made the empire, Unity and Solidarity is neglected. It is a marvel that the empire to which we owe debts which we can never repay, has been as loyal as it has because it has been treated with less than regard.' She contended that at the present time each one of them was bearing the burden of too many black coated civil servants quite unnecessarily because they were not getting one single constructive thing out of it. She declared that the name of Britain which stood high all over the world, was now regarded with distrust, dismay and anxiety. Mid-month saw another gymkhana which she opened at Charlton Road, Keynsham and was attended by over 1,000 people despite driving rain. She had been given a dog for her birthday which was much admired at the event but none of the spectators could guess its name when asked. She had called it Brandy, 'Because it was full of spirit and hard to get!' The rain continued throughout the 69th Frome Show thought to be one of the best one-day shows in the country with 1,713 entries despite it being a, 'bad year for cheese'. The Mavis Tate silver cup for the 'Best Shorthorn, Friesian or Ayrshire cow within ten miles of Frome was this time awarded to a Mr Masters of Wanstrow.

Often at her best when criticising her own party, during a meeting of Young Conservatives at the George Hotel in Frome she described the party's propaganda as 'deplorable', called the organisation 'puerile', and claimed that its policy was undefined. She went on to say that the Conservatives had to be willing to drop many of their past prejudices and any privileges it considered it had and develop a policy in tune with modern needs. She considered the present government to be '..well on the road to becoming a fascist government as it was appalling to see the way our people are ordered about and freedom curtailed, the way in which we are unable to express individuality, and the way in which we are gradually sitting down, a trend to create of us nothing but pawns set in the same mould.' Wealth was not gained by a rise in the weekly pay packet if it did not mean a greater capacity for a fuller life. She claimed that Government assertions that the standard of living has risen by 30% were nonsense is any housewife could explain. She also said that there was far too much dead wood in the Conservative Party. After the annual meeting of the Warwickshire Federation of Women's Institutes in Leamington at which she called for equality of opportunity for men and women in every profession including the Church. Mavis put forward a motion on behalf of the Frome Division expressing their 'dissatisfaction with the lack of vigour and direction shown in attacking the socialist administration in the first year of office.' When the chairman rang his bell to show that the time allowed for the speech had elapsed. She did not take any notice. He allowed her to continue for a few more sentences and then vigorously banged on the bell again and again. After a few moments of uproar the chairman said, 'I have given Mrs Tate a great deal of latitude, and I must ask her now to sit down and give other people a chance to speak'. She retorted, 'very well Mr Chairman, congratulations on the wonderful way in which you have tried to stifle discussion on policy and organisation'. The resolution was defeated by a large majority.

Towards the end of November Mavis was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Equal Pay Committee of the National Council of Women. The report of the Royal Commission on equal pay unanimously affirmed the conviction that the adoption of equal pay would be in the best interests of the country and called upon the government to make an early announcement.

In the same month she was back at Fortt's restaurant in Milsom Street launching a campaign for new members and warning that it was futile to rely on the mistakes of the present government to help the Conservatives regain power. On 2 December she was on the road with

the Brains Trust at Horsham Town Hall which was full to overcrowding. When asked a question about the growth of state control Mavis cited the example of the individual builder saying that if there was not so much red tape, restriction and interference we could easily have had a large number of houses by this time.' The small builder spends Sunday after Sunday filling in forms, who, in heaven's name, reads them? Hundreds of civil servants whom you and I pay for and whose time is practically wasted. In reply to a question about status of women she said that most normal women wanted a happy marriage and motherhood above all else but if a woman wished to be an engineer or a doctor she should be allowed to do so. 'During the war the country found women pretty useful for doing other things besides darning Dr Joad's socks'. She wanted men and women to be partners not one being a slave to the other. In conclusion each panel member was asked what they would order as the favourite prewar meal Mavis chose, Lobster Mornay; Chicken Maryland, (chicken and fried bananas) with a rum soufflé. She next attended the Brains Trust at the Town Hall in Leamington Spa once more in the company of CEM Joad, but no further details survive.

Her last political event of the year appears to have been a private meeting of women MPs at the Commons on behalf of the Equal Pay Campaign but a brief report states that there were several sides to the equal pay movement including the Labour woman's organisation and no course of action was decided upon…and she won a prize for whist at a Women's Institute Christmas party.

24. The Final Chapter 1947

The new year began at a frantic pace when Mavis began a ten day tour of the Frome Division taking part in events organised by the Conservative Association to include Farrington Gurney, Frome, Combe Down, Beckington, Litton, Timsbury, Chew Stoke, Buckland Dinham, Wellow, Norton St Phillip, Compton Martin and Priston. She hosted a New Year party at the George in Frome on Thursday, 2 January to include games competitions and dancing, followed by another at Beckington the next day this time with mystery and magic by way of a change.

At the Combe Down meeting she gave her views on the nationalisation of the mining industry, 'We are told that the miners are overjoyed because the mines will belong to the nation. Personally, I don't believe that nationalisation of the mines is going in itself to increase the output of coal per individual miner. I think that what would increase the output would be good housing, a better water supply in the countryside and an effort to put more colour and joy into the miner's life. His wife should be enabled to have nice clothes, new curtains, new covers, shoes for the children without great difficulty and adequate food. I know that miners have been given extra cheese and meat, I should like to see them have extra bacon and good new laid eggs from the English countryside for which I don't think yellow powder is an adequate substitute, glad as we are in London to see even a packet of that.' There was a fund raising whist drive at Buckland Dinham on January 7th and on top of all this she had her 'Touring Brains Trust' with the *Daily Express* appearing at the Pavilion, Bognor Regis on the 13th, during which she referred to Queen Elizabeth I as a 'woman of genius' and upon the question of women in sport gave the following opinion, 'There are a great number of games which women are encouraged to play which do not become them physically. I do not agree with women playing football,

boxing or wrestling, but I am not going to say that they should stop indoors just so that their men can come home and admire them'. Upon being asked which historical figure she would most like to meet she replied, 'Jesus Christ so that she could ask him what he did between his twelfth year and his thirty second year to attain the wisdom that he did'. Also prominent amongst the crew was Commander Archibald Campbell, an ex-Naval officer who was well known for appearing on the programme since its inception in 1941. He made over 200 appearances until 1947 when he was allegedly dropped for suggesting that scientists instead of animals should be used as test subjects for the Bikini Atoll atomic bomb tests. He was enormously popular with the public, which liked his direct and common-sense approach, although perhaps not so much in this case.

Mavis attended a whist drive in Wellow on the 8th while staying with the association's treasurer Admiral CA Ward at Litton House near Wells. On 17 January the annual meeting of the Bathampton Branch of the Conservative Association was held, she gave a talk based around breaking the law, and introduced the subject to the laughter of the audience by declaring that there was probably nobody present who had not broken some rules or regulations now in force,

> We may laugh, but we have been driven to it. We have been law-abiding and patriotic but now there is a great increase in real crime and a terrible increase in the evasion of rules. It is only natural that when there are too many laws and regulations, people will seek to evade them in some way or other. The people of this country today are not happy not contented not in support of the government. It is all very well to be breaking the law but gradually it's going to have a very serious effect on the strength of the nation and undermine it in many ways. The lack of housing is having real effect on family life. All over the country there are women who married during the war who hoped when it was over to set up home and start a family. They have had years of difficulty and years of rationing; the clothes are shabby; hours are spent are queueing for goods and their nerves are shattered. Their husbands return from the services expecting to settle down to family life in a home of their own, hoping to find happiness, prosperity, and better conditions for the children than they had themselves. But husbands find that they are lucky if they can find rooms with their own or their wives' parents. The wife is cross and her nerves are strained. We are proud to live in a free country which has held high the torch of liberty, and we think much of our system of Parliamentary government, but are you sure it is not in danger? Because I am not. It is unfortunate that during the war people had to sacrifice so much personal liberty and now they do not realise how much of that liberty has gone and how much remains. People who are tired soon become apathetic and cease to ask if these things need to be and wonder whether it is in their power to break the chains that bind them.
>
> If we say something doesn't matter and wait until the next election before we interest ourselves in politics and don't want this government after the next election, we must do something about it now. There is less freedom, less prosperity; there is discontent strikes and absenteeism. The people cannot be happy when they are governed by a party which has consistently preached class hatred. We were far happier during the war, when we all worked together. It is quite futile to help one part of the community and at the same time bring down the other. At present it doesn't matter what you turn to, there is a decline in prosperity, and the confidence of every section of the community has been shaken in some way or another'.

> Mrs Tate concluded by saying that it was 'up to the people in the division to do all they could to help the Association and to make it evident that the present conditions are such that we will not tolerate them in this land for another moment'.

The next Brains Trust meeting took place at the Winter Garden in Margate on the 22nd, this time joined by Lord Elton of Clevedon Court. To the question, 'What will be the result our women having been to war?' Mrs Tate replied, 'What women did in the war cannot make a bit of difference for nothing is so forgotten by men as when they are afraid of competition. Women are just going to be what they have always been, stronger, more practical, more foresighted and the gentler sex. Women's strength, if she only realised it, is her wisdom and making men think they are better than they really are'.

About 70 women's organisations took part in a mass meeting in support of equal pay at the Central Hall Westminster on 30 January. Thelma Cazalet Keir, Mavis Tate and Lady Megan Lloyd George were among the main speakers at what was the biggest mass meeting to be held in London since the end of the war.

Ellen Wilkinson MP for Jarrow and a close friend in support of equal pay despite her membership of the Communist Party and great political differences, died in St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. At the inquest the coroner gave the cause of death as 'heart failure following emphysema, with acute bronchitis and bronchial pneumonia, accelerated by barbiturate poisoning'. Wilkinson had been taking a combination of drugs for several months, to combat both her asthma and insomnia; the coroner believed she had inadvertently taken an overdose of barbiturates. With no evidence to indicate that the overdose was deliberate, he recorded a verdict of accidental death. Despite this, speculation that Wilkinson had committed suicide persisted. She was Minister of Education at the time of her death and her contribution to political life deserves far greater appreciation. Mavis must have felt her death keenly.

Meanwhile the Brains Trust roadshow rolled on with a visit to the Winter Garden in Eastbourne where they were joined by Bishop Walter Carey, Charles Taylor, businessman and local Conservative MP when asked how to get more people involved in the local council meetings Mavis replied that she would call on every house in the vicinity from 9:30 am to 6:30pm. Other topics included the advisability of tipping which she thought was on the increase because life is becoming harder and harder. The team was asked why the female characters, (the Muses) in Greek mythology were women and made to represent the arts when practically all famous poets' painters and musicians were men. Ever the contrarian, Dr Joad said it was wrong to believe that women had always inspired men to do their best work; no work worth doing was ever done for the love of a woman and that happily married life was enfeebling and deprived of a man of ambition. Rising to the bait and causing some laughter Mrs Tate replied that, 'The male is relatively unimportant ... men are weak, sentimental and unpractical'. When the team was asked who they thought had been instrumental increasing the happiness of the people in our time answers included Mr Churchill, Charlie Chaplin, and Field Marshall Smutts with Mavis choosing HG Wells. In the same week she attended a meeting of the Nottingham Business and Professional Women's Club as chairman of the Equal Pay Campaign Committee during which it was decided to send a message of support to the women of the civil service who are seeking an equal rate of pay with their male colleagues.

As part of her work as chairman of the Special Committee of Child Care of the National Council of Women Mavis took up the case of a schoolgirl of 12 years old from Kilburn who had spent 222 days in a remand home in Ealing with thieves and prostitutes even though she had committed no offence, having been found to be ‘beyond parental control’ and in moral danger. Although Mavis found the home to be an extremely good one it was not suitable in the girl's case and despite the matter being brought to the notice of the Middlesex County Council nothing had been done. The clerk of the council agreed to institute enquiries, and she was eventually placed in a school for ‘maladjusted' children.

Mavis was the guest speaker once more at the annual meeting of the Frome Division of the Conservative and Unionist Association at Fortt’s in Bath on 29 March. She was again heavily critical of the Labour government saying that it has shown itself to have almost a genius at lack of foresight and a tragic failure. She described the nation is having deteriorated with regard to honesty and the will to work, 'the capacity to give of your best is being weakened throughout the land through lack of nourishment, lack of incentive, lack of opportunity and lack of material'. During short tour of the constituency, she had addressed some 2,000 electors attending two or three meetings per night and says that she intends to be present at the divisional whist final on April 14 which is expected to be attended by about 800 people.

In mid-April, Mavis, now billed as the ‘Famous Brains Truster’ gave her opinions on the Transport Bill in the *Rugby Advertiser* attacking the government’s plan to cut passenger trains by10% during the summer making holidays very difficult particularly at weekends. She described the bill as a highly controversial nationalisation scheme during which the transport workers will have a big say in the running of the services and they will run buses and trains to suit themselves first and travelling public second, the control of the all-powerful British Transport Commission will be centred in London, almost every large and small transport business will automatically become servants and properties of the government who will direct them to their fresh tasks and tell them what to do. Here, as in all industries present problems should be left to the experts; men who have spent a lifetime ~~and~~ building up the great commercial reputation that Britain has enjoyed’. With some exaggeration she described the nationalisation of transport as getting ‘very near the conditions of Hitlerite Germany’.

What was described as a ‘private’ Brains Trust was held at the Palace Theatre in London, Mavis responded to the question, ‘Should I marry and have a large family under the threat of the atom? with ‘Women don’t decide according to these long-term considerations.’ The 28th saw her talk at a meeting with others on behalf of the Housewives League in Kingsway Hall London as part of the build-up to what is described as a ‘monster rally’ to be held at the Royal Albert Hall on 6 June.

In May Mavis attended the funeral of Dr Frederick Fox former medical superintendent of the Brislington House Asylum in Bristol and a former chairman of the Frome Conservative Association. It was he that took strong objection to her description of the Frome Division in 1944 as being in a dormant state saying that any lack of activity was due to members concentrating on the war effort and would be revitalised with the arrival of peace. A garden fete was organised by the Rode Branch of the party for Saturday 7 June to take place at Langham House with a special guest appearance by famous screen actor John Mills, she also had a full schedule of meetings arranged at various branches within the Division. Mavis was due to speak at the Women's Institute Hall on 'The Industrial Charter' in front of Keynsham &

Saltford Conservatives. She was now living at 6 Bloomfield Terrace, Pimlico SW1 the same street in which her parents had lived at no.34 many years before and where she had been living with her first husband Gerald Gott. Her house was described as painted blue and ‘one of the smartest of the neat two-storeyed houses in the road.'

She was reported to have had another acute attack of kidney pain on Sunday 1 June but felt well enough on the Tuesday to travel up to North Staffordshire for a meeting of the Equal Pay Campaign Committee where arrangements were being made for a demonstration on the following Thursday, (5th) for which she offered to lead the delegates to the Commons to lobby MPs. driving her own car.

Her theme for this meeting was, ‘The status of the home and the importance of the family unit’. ‘Everyone would agree that a happy healthy home life in which a child could develop its creative faculties was probably the best surroundings a child could have. I do not say that the contribution a father can make is not of inestimable importance, but I do you say that no one but a mother and a wife can really make the perfect home. The status of the mother in the home today is one of great seriousness. People may tell you that the poor are better fed today than they have ever been the history of the country, I do not accept that as true. She spoke of her experiences as a magistrate in the matrimonial court at West Willesden saying that many marriages of young people floundered because of bad home conditions and that the lack of realisation of the importance of women in the home was because women's work was regarded as cheap labour and of very little account.

' When I fight, as always shall, for equal pay for equal work I am not fighting simply for women to have more money, I am fighting for a principal, for justice and above all for the recognition of the invaluable part that women must play in a natural life of the country if it is to be happy and healthy. Dealing with the question of equal opportunity for women she asked how many today had an opportunity of a full and satisfying existence. She urged the need for centres with the whole family could gather together. She said it was true that there was a need for more people to do hard work, but most women were already overworked. There were men who were not putting in a full day’s work for a full day’s pay and the sooner trade unions said that extra work or better work should be rewarded with better pay the better for this country’. This was the last time that Mavis Tate spoke in public.

25. The Wiser Thing …

Presumably Mavis returned home to London late on the Tuesday night or Wednesday morning only a few hours before her death, always one to put principle before party, she had spent some time writing to all Labour MPs expressing her pleasure on behalf of the Equal Pay Campaign Committee on a very remarkable victory achieved for the principle of equality at the Labour Party Conference in Margate during 26-30 May.

On the morning of Thursday 5th June Mavis was found dead in her kitchen at Bloomfield Terrace at the age of 54 having been dead for some hours before she was discovered. Reports in the morning papers quote the housekeeper's husband Mr Walsh as saying that she was found dead in bed during the night but had been seen pottering in her garden during Wednesday and

a woman neighbour said that she had spoken to her the previous evening when she was chatting away gaily wearing a pretty pink frock and seemed ‘full of beans’ showing no sign of illness. Mr Walsh said last night that his wife did not find Mrs Tate’s body and that he thought a friend staying with her might have made the discovery. When Bridget Walsh married, Mavis bought the house next door so that she and her husband could live there and continue as her house keeper. She said that within the last few days Mavis had told friends in both London and Bath that her financial resources were slender.

A report in the *Daily Mirror* on the day of her death states that police officers were still undecided as to how a gas jet came to be turned on in the room where she was found and that death was believed to been due to coal gas poisoning.

The inquest into her death was opened on 10 July at the coroner's office in Westminster in front of Mr Neville Stafford, her brother Kenneth Weir Hogg OBE gave evidence saying that he last saw her about three weeks ago when she seemed fairly bright but again complained of being unable to sleep, adding that she always tried to do too much and was under great strain because of her many activities but had never threatened to take her own life. She continued with her political and social engagements despite being in frequent pain and suffering from sleeplessness. Mr Stafford asked,

Do you know whether her activities had been so numerous that she was under strain recently?

Col. Hogg: I am sure that she was.

The doctor who had attended her since February was Dr William Urwich of Wellington Court, Knightsbridge. He gave evidence that she had had five major operations and suffered from kidney trouble, he last heard from her on May 29 when he called around as she was in acute pain and had suffered from stones in both kidneys for some years. He told her that it would be necessary to have another x-ray to investigate the cause, she did not take this very well and said that she could not face another operation which during this period were carried out under general anaesthetic, requiring prolonged hospital stays and carrying significant risks of bleeding, infection, or damage to kidney function. Pain relief was the primary focus with the use of opium derivatives like morphine and barbiturates for sedation.

The doctor gave her an injection on Thursday night and another on Friday morning and asked her to spend the weekend making up her mind about further treatment. On Sunday, June 1 she had another acute attack of pain and rang up Sister Fielder who visited her and contacted me saying that she was suffering from insomnia. I gave permission to give her an injection of barbitone.

Mr Stafford: Her general health was deteriorating?

Dr Urwick: I think one could say that with justification.

Mr Stafford: She faced the pain with great courage?

Dr Urwick, Yes.

Dr Urwick was of the opinion that her illnesses caused her to become increasingly depressed, and the coroner asked if she could have picked up some illnesses at Buchenwald concentration camp when she was there. The doctor replied,

'I formed the opinion that it was not affecting her general health but her nervous system. She probably suffered from all she had gone through there'.

Dr Alistair Macleod assistant director of the York Clinic for Psychological Medicine at Guys Hospital gave evidence to say that he was a tenant of a flat belonging to Mavis at Bloomfield Terrace, but also knew her as a friend and that she had phoned on the night of her death and asked him to come and see her. She said she felt very depressed; I tried to reassure her not to take a gloomy view. The next morning Dr Macleod noticed the smell of gas in his room.

Dr F Louis of the Royal Free Hospital stated that death was due to coal gas poisoning. On searching his sister's room, Col. Kenneth Weir Hogg of 2, Seamore Place, West London found a suicide note addressed to him an extract from which was read out,

> ..As I have no one dependent upon me it seems the wiser thing to do to end my life. I cannot endure the extensive and constant pain in my head and practically no sleep at all week after week. An invalid is only a national liability today….

A verdict was recorded that Mavis died from asphyxiation through coal gas poisoning self-administered when the balance of her mind was disturbed through ill health. The fragment of inquest testimony that has come down to us is of course very inadequate and her immediate reasons for suicide will always remain a mystery, her decision must have come on very suddenly, she had much planned including a lecture trip to America and must have had a sudden fit of intense depression but took the time to write a note only part of which has been made public and prepare herself for the end. Any interruption, a phone call or knock on the door during that 20 minutes or so might have saved her life. Is it notable that she chose the same method to end her life as her mother had done in 1919 perhaps giving it some legitimacy in her troubled mind?

As she died intestate her estate of £35,482 went to her brother Kenneth, according to her friend Arthur Duckworth she was to have a private funeral and had expressed a wish that no flowers or letters of sympathy be the sent but whether this was a long-standing wish of hers or contained in the suicide note we do not know. It was requested that mourners send donations to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. In his appreciation of her Arthur Duckworth concluded with, 'there can be no doubt that her defeat in the election of 1945 was a great disappointment and during the last two years she suffered from constant ill health although as always she displayed to the outside world the same unfailing buoyancy and courage so that probably very few people realised the full extent of the deep unhappiness and loneliness that great depressed her'. She suffered greatly after Buchenwald which she had undertaken with fellow MP Archibald Southby and shortly after returning, both she and Southby had been struck down by the mysterious disease. Mavis became crushed by pain and depression which

by the summer of 1947 had become too hard to bear. Nancy Astor was at Mirador when she received the news from her son Bobby,

> 'Oh! Mother Darling,
> Mavis committed suicide in her poor little home yesterday. What is this life? Perhaps this is only a sort of dream anyway. Death to me is so final, suicide is so tragic, say what people may, I know the black misery that precedes the thoughts of life being no use to anyone anymore. I know there only too well, Poor, poor creatures who are driven by despair... I know no one who is or was a better friend than Mavis to you. She loved you more than anybody. Friends like her are rare..."

She left no will but her final message was published in the June issue of the local party paper, *The Gazette* with the heading, 'What are we to do? typically, it was dismay at the state of the country and a plea for the party that she had served all her life; she ended the article with,

> We live in days of very great danger, and the only thing that can save us, (and that only with very great effort and sacrifice) is good government. Nothing could be more deplorable than the electorate to be faced with the possibility of having to choose from a number of parties none of them really strong. If we are dissatisfied with the present government then the only thing for us to do is to join another party, to devote our energies and our finance to make it as strong, as virile, and as capable of carrying at the very different policies it will have to evolve to solve the problems facing us. It will need our ideas, our finance, and our loyalty. Tempting though it may be to belong to some new group with nebulous ideas, and no opportunity of governing we have to ask ourselves if we can I afford to do this. All the help we can give is needed by a party which really could replace the one in power at the moment, and now in this our of danger is the time to turn to it and strengthen it for the sake of our people, our freedom and our country. The only practical alternative party at the moment is the Conservative party -join it. Bring in a new wealth of ideas, of energy and of kind.

The electoral division of Frome was abolished and incorporated into the new District of North Somerset in a reorganisation before the general election of 1950. The seat was won by conservative Edwin Leather a former captain in the Canadian Army who was confirmed as successor to Mavis in October 1947. He won by only 903 votes and paid tribute to Mavis who he said had 'served with great distinction here for many years and many older members will know that she was a war casualty just as surely as if she had served in the front line' Ted Leather held the seat until retiring in 1964.

§§§

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