

Edith Lyttelton Gell was born in 1860, married in 1889 and died in 1944. Before her marriage to Philip Lyttelton Gell, she was the Hon. Edith Brodrick, daughter of the 8th Viscount Midleton of Peper Harow, Surrey, and sister of William St John Fremantle Brodrick, 1st Earl Midleton (1856-1942), a distinguished politician who was Secretary of State for War from 1900-1903 and Secretary of State for India from 1903-1905. Edith shared her husband's interests and took an active role in political and Church of England fundraising and charitable activities, nationally as well as locally

An indefatigable writer of devotional poems, hymns, and moralistic pageants and tracts, Edith Lyttelton Gell strongly supported traditional family values. She was prominent in organisations such as the Mothers' Union, the Central Church Union and the Union of Women Workers. Derbyshire church matters were another interest and she involved herself in both Carsington and Wirksworth parishes. Deeply conventional in outlook, Edith Lyttelton Gell for many years published or circulated her writings amongst her extended family and social circle. She reached a wider readership with her memoirs, 'Under Three Reigns'.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of her papers relates to the work Edith Lyttelton Gell undertook to complement her spouse's involvement in Rhodesia. Females were thought to outnumber males in the population of Britain and, to address this 'surplus', emigration was widely promoted as a remedy not only for the scarcity of well paid employment for women but also for the shortage of potential husbands. Edith was a member of the British Women's Emigration Society and in 1901 became Chair of the South African Emigration Expansion Committee. She played a key role both in encouraging women to settle in the new country of Rhodesia and in vetting their suitability.

She provided practical advice to intending female emigrants and her correspondence in the opening years of the 20th century includes much on the management and staffing of the Salisbury Hostel in Bulawayo, a facility for new women arrivals.

All Edith Lyttelton Gell's papers in Derbyshire Record Office are in the collection referenced D3287, except for a travel journal with the reference D3311/125.

Source: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/4868e279-9fb1-4d58-ac44-711dd382d98e>

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