

## MAILBAG

# Keep women at home

**S**IR,—A woman's place is in the home. We don't want Lady Bank Managers, Prime Ministers, or big Lady Executives in business.

God made women for the home to be man's "help-mate and comfort adviser."

**R. E. HEMBLING.**  
Clapham Common, S.W.4.

# MAILBAG

## WOMEN AT THE TOP: WHY NOT?

*The letter from Mr. R. E. Hembling (Mailbag: Tuesday) objecting to the appointment of a woman as a bank manager, and insisting a woman's proper place is in the home has produced many replies. Here is a selection:*

**S**IR, — Not all women want only to be "help-mate and comfort adviser." We have a mind which sometimes wants to work, and we can stay at home if we want to.

Why shouldn't we be bank managers, Prime Ministers, or big lady executives in business if we have the ability?

(Miss) **JAN E. DODGE.**

London, W.2.

### A woman P.M.?

**T**HANK goodness we have got a woman bank manager at last, and may there be many more. And roll on the day when we have a woman Prime Minister. Our country will be a much better place to live in then.

(Mrs.) **ELSIE GOODING.**

Alford, Lincolnshire.

### A man's job...

**W**OMAN is nature's chief instrument for the continuance of the human race, and man is intended by nature to provide for and comfort her. It is his job.

So perhaps, after all, woman would be wiser to leave to him the various means of doing his job. After all, man invented them.

(Mrs.) **L. ELSON.**

London, S.W.17.

# MISS H. M. HARDING MANAGER

CONGRATULATIONS to Miss H. M. Harding on her appointment as Manager of the new Hanover Street Branch. Miss Harding was a member of the Reading and Windsor District Committee of the Association from 1945 to 1947, and the Women's Committee of the Association is justifiably pleased that a woman who has been an active supporter of the Association should be the one through whom their programme for equal opportunity for women has been so much advanced. It is important from the standpoint of both Women and Male Staff that this appointment should be viewed in its proper perspective, and the Association compliments the Bank on what must be regarded as a decision in keeping with modern thought, and one which can certainly have the effect of further enlarging the Bank's business.

## WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

... the Management has thought it well to explain that the post has been gained on merit.

—INVESTORS CHRONICLE, 23rd May.

... in some doubt about the Bank's psychology ... would she (the average woman) not rather have a personable man (as bank manager).

—INVESTORS GUARDIAN, 23rd May.

This, clearly, is an unusual progression.

—ECONOMIST, 24th May.

Honey Blonde to be bank manager.

—Headline, MORNING ADVERTISER, 17th May.

Miss Harding should use her feminine good sense to change things.

—DAILY EXPRESS, 17th May.

But Miss Harding's bank will be TOUGH, too.

—DAILY MIRROR, 17th May.

First woman bank manager is no revolutionary.

—EVENING NEWS, 16th May.

Call her Madam.

—EVENING STANDARD, 16th May.

It will be some time before the City gets back to normal again. After all, a woman bank manager. ...

—THE STAR, 16th May.

A woman's place is in the home.

—Mr. R. E. Hembling in a letter to the DAILY MAIL, 20th May.

Why shouldn't we be bank managers?—Miss Jan E. Dodge.

Thank goodness we have got a woman bank manager at last.—Mrs. Elsie Gooding.

Women would be wiser to leave to him (man) the various means of doing his job.—Mrs. L. Elson.

—Replies to DAILY MAIL Letter, 23rd May.

Male Customer: "I never take money from a woman—but in your case I'll make an exception!"

—Caption to cartoon, BIRMINGHAM MAIL, 17th May.

The new bank manager's going to be a honey!

—Headline, SOUTH WALES ECHO, 16th May.

... it is thought she might attract women to the bank. They must be mad. Miss Harding should have been put in the most mannish area possible. Business would have been phenomenal.

—DAILY HERALD, 17th May.

Photograph by the 'Daily Sketch'.



In commenting on 'The Changing Face of Barclays' ... one of our women readers says:—

When a young man joined the bank, say, twenty-five years ago, he could enjoy the happy thought that by the time he was thirty he would be able to apply to Head Office, through his Departmental or Branch Manager, for permission to marry; by that time he would, in the Bank's view, be earning sufficient salary to keep himself and a wife. He would present his case to the Manager who, after carefully explaining the necessity of keeping up a good appearance and address, would agree to put the application to Staff Department for a decision: a week or ten days later official 'blessing' would arrive.

Today, however, things are a little different. The young man who is not married at entry is distinguished by the magic word 'Single' on his Report which will, no doubt, cause Inspectors to remark, 'Promising young man—should go far.'

Ludicrous to sigh for the good old days, of twenty-five years ago? Yes, possibly, for how could one expect the earnest young men of today to approach the Manager on such a delicate matter as marriage, especially when the Manager is a lady. ...



# Miss Harding —BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN BANK CHIEF

**F**ORTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD Miss Hilda Millicent Harding is to be Britain's first woman bank manager. She will be in charge of Barclays' new branch in Hanover-street, — London, which opens in December.

Miss Harding is trim and blonde. She began as a £50-a-year shorthand-typist in the street of banking—Lombard-street.

She plans to make her branch one of the brightest—with flowers and gay decorations. She said: "It will be a friendly place, and there won't be any of the old gloomy atmosphere associated with banks."



What makes Miss Harding the first woman manager? Said a senior official, Mr. A. R. Milward: "Her flair, common sense, ready intelligence, and wit."

**OFFICIALLY** the appointment represents a further stage in the development of woman's role in banking.

**UNOFFICIALLY**, said a spokesman: "It's an experiment—but one we are sure will come off."

**OVERDRAFTS?** This is what Miss Harding said: "The policy of the bank is decided, and I shall carry it out. If I have to refuse, I shall do so reluctantly—but I hope I don't have to say 'No' too often."

# A Honey Blonde Among the Money COCKTAILS AT HILDA'S BEAUTIFUL BANK...

**T**HERE was something distinctly odd going on yesterday in a certain London West End branch of Barclays Bank. Across the counter came whisky, cocktails, peanuts and cigarettes served by waiters in dinner jackets.

On the receiving side stood the bank manager, the staff and their guests.

The explanation was that it was a party to celebrate the opening on Monday of Barclays new branch at Hanover Street, just off Oxford Circus. AND—more important—in charge of their first woman bank manager.

She is Miss Hilda Harding (42), a honey blonde. Shiplake, near Henley-on-Thames, the first woman bank manager in Britain.

## The Chink . . .

On Monday it will be the chink of money across the counter. But yesterday there was the chink of glasses. Otherwise the effect will be the same—mushroom pink walls and ceiling, hyacinth blue carpet, blue

upholstered armchairs, concealed lighting and flowers arranged in best West End florist's style over a lighted glass table.

There is a special writing room for women, and even—unheard of in banks—a ladies' powder-room striplighted, with a long mirror.

The decor was all Miss Harding's idea and for months since her appointment in May was announced she has been supervising it.

Yesterday, in a velvet-trimmed blue jersey dress and pearls, Miss Harding, who started as a shorthand-typist with Barclays in 1934, had taken refuge at her blue leather-topped desk in the manager's inner sanctum. She is a quiet woman, whose hobby is gardening.

"I am not scared about opening on Monday," she said.

## . . . Of China

"To tell you the truth I was much more scared about the party to-day. I decided on the decor myself and I am very pleased with what they have done. I wanted comfort and soft colours.

"I believe there are some customers already in this district who would like to bank here. The branch is not exclusively for women by any means. There are business houses and so on.

"What do I think of bank raids? The same as any other manager, I suppose."

Beside Miss Harding's wide desk was a bookcase. On top of it the feminine touch—a Copenhagen china figure of a little girl and flowers. Inside a Stock Exchange Year Book and the "Practice of Law and Banking."

Miss Harding's "right hand man" is a woman, Miss Margaret Stone, who is first clerk. There are five women and two men, plus a male messenger.

# The first woman manager puts flowers in the bank

By a London  
Reporter

**R**IGHT opposite the door on a little shelf stood a carefully arranged bowl of flowers. The mushroom coloured walls generated warmth and a friendly atmosphere. The unobtrusive cornice lighting was a welcome accessory rather than a utilitarian necessity. In one corner leading off the main room was a ladies' writing room and there is even a ladies' powder room.

Such is the feminine impact which blonde-haired Miss Hilda Harding, who, on Monday becomes the first woman bank manager, has already had on her new West End branch.

Yesterday when I called at Hanover Street, she told me that all the interior



**MISS HILDA HARDING.**  
*Britain's first woman bank manager.*

decorations had been her own ideas. The flowers she intends to replace with fresh ones daily. The ladies'

writing rooms, she explained, was something she felt banks ought to have. Her branch is in an area where there are likely to be an appreciable number of women customers.

"Many women when they are shopping and make a call at the bank feel they would like to be able to go into a room where they can put down their parcels and carry out the writing involved in their transaction in comfort," Miss Harding told me.

## NO STRIPED TROUSERS

Customers will not find Miss Harding wearing any undeviating feminine equivalent of black jacket and striped trousers. "I shall wear what I like," she said.

Her experience covers every field of the banking system right up to a head office appointment in the general manager's department.

How is her appointment viewed by bank officials? Mr W. D. Gosling, a West End and city director of the bank, said he thought the appointment of a woman manager was inevitable. On Miss Harding's staff are four women and two men. The cashier is one of the men.

# Her bank is like a well-kept house

IF you met Hilda Harding outside her bank, you would find it difficult to place her. Tall, good-looking, with an air of quiet authority about her, she might be any of several things—a doctor, a don, the headmistress of a fairly orthodox school, or the successful mother of a well-integrated family. In fact, as a pioneer of women in bank management, she probably combines many of the qualities needed for all these careers. Her original intention was to be a landscape gardener.

No. 13 Hanover Street is a new branch of Barclays Bank. All honour to Barclays for doing the thing wholeheartedly and giving their first woman manager her head in arranging things there. To step inside this bank is to step inside a well-kept home: Miss Harding refers to her keen team, but the impression is almost of a family.

There is nothing exclusively feminine about the soft colouring of walls and lighting; but there is something much more homely than usual about the arrangements for comfortable seating, an alcove in which to write cheques, a powder-room for women clients, and the fact that youth (and feminine youth at that) is at the helm, if one may so describe the other side of the counter, where a woman first clerk and first cashier are squired by two fresh-faced, athletic-looking boys. The whole place looks as though a good housewife was in charge; and it is no surprise to learn that the messenger who welcomes one in is proudly responsible for its spick-and-span condition.

## Self-cook kitchen

Miss Harding's room is immediately inside the door, with another door, usually wide open, leading to the work side of the counter. The room is small and has an efficient charm of its own, its chief interest point being a couple of the rare "Flora Danica" plates, very well hung. Miss Harding ejected the electric clock which had been thought suitable for her status. She also insisted on the same furniture for staff and customers. Below stairs she has instituted a small kitchen where her team can prepare themselves a real lunch instead of having to fight for expensive West



Miss Hilda Harding, manager of Barclays Bank, Hanover Street branch

End snacks. A *very* fancy apron belongs to the best washer up (male), a great joke with the staff. The cutlery was won by Miss Harding at a fair in Teignmouth!

We talked of beginnings, a fitting topic, for the branch which began from scratch with "Account No. 1" has just had its first balance and got it right in one try. Miss Harding was a pupil of Henley Grammar School, one of the first girls who were drafted into what had been a boys' school; and she learnt early how to work alongside the opposite sex. She left school in 1932 (she is 43 now) and really drifted into bank work because her sister had joined Barclays Bank in Henley. She herself went as a shorthand typist to the High Wycombe branch. And she was bored. For six months she carried on with routine work but she would probably never have made the grade had not her manager, a wise man in his appreciation of personality, taken the trouble to explain wider aspects of banking to her. Shortly afterwards she went on to the ledgers, which she enjoyed.

Seven years at local headquarters at Reading were followed by what she considers her most valuable experience—a spell as general manager's secretary at Lombard Street, where, again, horizons opened as she gained the knowledge of City

finance. She confesses that this insight into the larger fields of banking is something that does not come the way of the ordinary branch manager. In 1950 she went to the Administrative Staff College at Henley; but she still had no inkling that she was being groomed for stardom. It was a complete surprise to her when, in May, 1958, she was told that she was to be the first woman branch manager.

## Deliberate choice

The choice of a West End branch, in a well banked area, was a deliberate one. It meant that no one was obliged to bank there unless they wanted to: it therefore gave an accurate indication of any prejudice against a woman in charge. There has been none: in seven months the work has steadily grown, in a completely normal manner; and Miss Harding's clientele is as cross-section a slice of the community as could be desired.

She is proud of her team's achievement; but it is as a team that she thinks of it. It would be difficult to find a woman with less personal vanity, in spite of obvious self-confidence. She describes the whole set-up as "all working together—it is just that when a decision has to be made I happen to be the person who has to make it." Will there be other woman managers? Miss Harding thinks so: certainly in Barclays, but she admits that there are difficulties. It is, she thinks, hard for a girl to make the decision when she leaves school that banking is a life career for her, though the time may not be so far off when she will. The fact that Miss Harding's salary is exactly the same as that of her male counterparts should encourage this; but there is still a marriage bar in some of the banks. Moreover, though she herself would probably not have voiced it, the particular qualities of coolness and emotional detachment which are required in what she refers to as "judgment," so necessary in the part of her business referring, for example, to credit are not essentially feminine attributes, though when women have this flair they have it to perfection. Or can think of Service women, for instance.

In any case, 13 Hanover Street is demonstrating the success of a woman's brain.



**HILDA HARDING**

*She can be tough, too.*

# Bank manager is a WOMAN

**BRITAIN'S first  
WOMAN bank  
manager was appointed  
yesterday.**

She is Miss Hilda Harding, a forty-two-year-old honey blonde, and she is to manage a new branch of Barclays Bank in Hanoverstreet, Westminster.

To announce her appointment a Press conference was called in London yesterday.

Miss Harding wore a navy blue silk dress and jacket with a white frill at the neckline.

She also wore nylons, pearls and a marcasite brooch.

*Was this how she would dress in her new job?*

Miss Harding said: "I shall remain as feminine as I can. There will be flowers in my bank, too."

But Miss Harding's bank

will be TOUGH, too. She said: "If I am approached for overdrafts there will be times when I shall have to be firm."

Miss Harding, who lives at the Oxfordshire village of Shiplake, joined Bar-

clays as a shorthand typist when she was eighteen.

She became ledger clerk, director's secretary, then secretary to Mr. R. Thornton, general manager.

Her pay as manager will be the same as a man's.



# BLONDE WHO RUNS A BANK

**B***BUSINESSMEN in the centre of Mayfair are queuing up for a heart-to-heart talk with their new bank manager.*

For the first time in their lives they are ready to discuss the contents of their pocket-book with a blonde.

They are the lucky customers of a bank with the feminine touch—the prettiest Barclay's Bank in London with the uncontested claim of the prettiest bank manager . . .

They are greeted in the inner sanctum of this new-style bank by a smart, efficient honey-blonde—42-year-old Miss Hilda Harding.

Here they are encouraged to see their financial problems in an entirely new light—the soft pink glow of concealed cornice illumination.

Mushroom pink and gold walls and delicate vases of skilfully arranged flowers enhance the charm of the woman behind the Swedish-style desk with its rounded corners.

She wears a knitted blue jersey dress to match the blue of the leather on her desk top—or perhaps a discreetly clinging model suit which blends with her chic surroundings . . .

"A woman thinks of these little things," she told me.

Easy chairs and thick pile carpets are there to soften the effect of a tactful, soothing manner that can change to an inflexible clarity of tone when a firm refusal is in the offing.

This bank is designed to attract women customers—though men customers are welcomed.

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£ £ £

The nylon-curtained French window type doors and bow-fronted windows connive at making all the customers feel more in the pink than in the red.

But everywhere there is an underlying seriousness. The glass is armoured-plated . . .

Already many women's organisations have asked for their accounts to be transferred to this attractive bank.

There are many titled clients among them.

Said Miss Harding, "Professional women are taking more interest in financial details these days. Many of them control the family budget. Here, I hope, they will be more at home . . ."

For six months she planned with the architects how the bank should look, and how best to cater for Eve.

There are small private alcoves for those who do not like to be overlooked.



MISS HARDING . . . in certain quarters, a minor revolt.

## A BLOW FOR EQUALITY

a writing-room with wall-attached desks and well-sprung settee, and a cute ladies' powder room with a long mirror and dressing-room.

The effect is not unlike a theatre foyer.

On all sides there are convenient but unobtrusive shelves for handbags. "I know how it is when women are out shopping, laden with parcels. It is nice for them to have somewhere to put their bags while writing out cheques, and to have beautiful bowls of flowers on the tables to refresh them while they think things out . . ."

"When I was given carte blanche to fit out the bank at the most wonderful and expensive store in London, I let it go to my head like any other woman.

"After all, this office is my second home and I spend long hours in it, so it might as well be to my taste."

Noise is kept to a minimum throughout this streamlined bank with acoustic tiling.

Has Miss Harding any fear of the bandits currently terrorising banks in all parts of London?

With calm assurance she declared that she was quite prepared to take her chance along with her male counterparts—"and I don't think my risks are any greater than theirs.

"I have adequate safeguards and all the usual emergency aids.

"There are also precautions which must remain secret.

From Pamela Kitchener in London

"And I have two men on my staff—a 25-year-old cashier and an 18-year-old clerk—both hardy young men with good nerves."

But pretty young women predominate in this bank—happy to have a boss who has struck a resounding blow for sex equality.

Miss Harding joined Barclay's as a shorthand-typist for £50 a year in 1934.

"I've always had ambition, and gone from job to job. I don't think men resent that. Before I was given this appointment—which carries the same salary for either sex (£2,000 a year plus)—I was secretary to the general manager."

Asked whether women make just as good bank managers as men, the executive responsible for Miss Harding's present job side-stepped by saying: "This appointment was based purely on merit."

£ £ £

Asked if it would be the future policy of the bank to make managers out of other women members of the staff Miss Harding replied: "There is no reason why not. Barclay's like to encourage young women just as much as the boys.

"The only reason there has not been a woman manager before is because most girls leave fairly young to get married.

"Each time that happens the bank has to begin training another girl clerk from scratch, and it is very seldom they rise to a sufficiently high position to be in the running for such a post."

Does Miss Harding think it desirable that parents should encourage their daughters to aim at being bank managers?

"I do," asserted Miss Harding, "because if they take their job seriously, it helps them to be better wives and household managers, even if they do leave to get married.

"But if they take it easy with the idea that Mr Right is around the corner—and he isn't—then they must struggle along all their lives in a minor job with small pay."

£ £ £

Women's clubs all over the country have made Britain's first woman bank manager their star guest at a series of public luncheons, and she has been asked to give talks at educational institutions and youth hostels, in addition to the heavy demands of her new job.

Many people come asking just to be allowed to look at this unusual bank with its feminine boss. Men are keen to see how it works with a woman in the chair. Male bank managers turn up in organised parties to tour the building.

But there is a minor revolt in certain quarters.

A girl going into her bank—one of the standard gloom toms—a few days after the new one opened, was greeted with gentle sarcasm.

"No flowers on the counter this morning!" said a clerk.

"And we have not had time to hang the lace curtains.

"Don't ask to know the state of your overdraft, madam, until the messenger gets back with the smelling salts and scent spray. . ."

## £1-a-week typist is now bank manager

Readers of this article will know I am a collector of women who have made their mark in a man's world. I have written of women engineers, women fliers, a woman harbour-master, even a woman Prime Minister.

This week I add to my collection a woman bank manager.

She is 43-year-old MISS HILDA HARDING, who looks after a branch of one of the Big Five (Barclays) in London's West End. The secret of Miss Harding's

success is an unspectacular but convincing one.

While in her teens, she got a £1-a-week job as a short-hand-typist at the bank she now manages. She stayed put, worked hard and promotion was the result.

The war, when many men were away, helped the promotion — as it helped women in other jobs to get ahead. When ability was less thick on the ground, Miss Harding's was soon recognised.

And once given its chance, it kept Miss Harding at the top.

"If you ask me what makes a top woman tick, I'm pretty certain it's just being herself," she says. "I knew I couldn't do this job as a man does.

"I knew I'd have to do it the way I wanted to do it as a woman."

I looked around her desk for the something that might symbolise the feminine touch. I found it—a cigarette lighter covered in milk.

17 May 1958

# MISS HILDA — FIRST BLONDE BANK BOSS

By LINDY WILSON

**A 42-YEAR-OLD blonde was appointed Britain's first woman bank manager yesterday.**

Miss Hilda Harding, who started with the bank in 1934 as a £50-a-year shorthand-typist, takes over her own branch of Barclays Bank in nine months.



Though she plans to keep her office in fashionable Hanover-street, W., very feminine, Miss Harding won't let the feminine approach influence the way she'll operate.

"We're painting the walls in pastel colours and there'll be masses of flowers," she told me. But she made it clear getting an overdraft won't be all pastel and flowers.

"Bank policy is to keep up the credit squeeze," she said.

### I'll be firm

"So much as I hate saying 'No,' I'll just have to be firm. "Anyone who thinks they'll get round me with smooth words just hasn't a chance."

Miss Harding would not say what Manager Harding will get as Britain's first woman bank boss.

"But I won't be in the surtax class," she said.

Miss Harding, who will have a staff of six clerks in her branch, has no special rules for dealing with her customers.

"I treat men and women alike," she said. "I try to be tactful and charming to them both—and hope for the best."

"I do want to be helpful—that's really my job—and I do want to make people using my bank feel at home."

Miss Harding, whose home is at Ship-lake, near Henley-on-Thames, said she certainly wouldn't mind having an all-male staff.

### Stay feminine

"I think men always work well with women," she told me.

She added: "I think it is only masculine women that men dislike."

"I've always tried to stay feminine. "I've always had ambition—gone from job to job—and I don't think men resent that."

"I shall stay as feminine as I can. I shall wear whatever I feel like," she said.

Mr. R. G. Horton, Barclays general manager, hedged yesterday when asked if women are as good bank managers as men.

"We approached this appointment purely on the basis of merit," he said.

Britain's first woman bank manager, Miss Hilda Harding. "I shall stay as feminine as I can—and I shall wear whatever I feel like," she said yesterday.

## The new bank manager is a lady who can say 'No'

**A** WOMAN who started work as a shorthand typist is to become Britain's first woman bank manager.

She is Miss Hilda Millicent Harding, 42, of Shiplake, near Henley-on-Thames, Oxon. and when Barclay's Bank open their new branch in Hanover Street, in the West End of London in December, the first clients will find her in charge.

At a Press conference yesterday at the bank's Lombard Street branch in the City Miss Harding wore a smart navy silk dress and matching jacket.



Miss Harding

Asked what she would wear for her new job, she replied: "I shall remain

as feminine as I can."

But the feminine touch is not necessarily soft. Miss Harding promised that she will be able to say "No."

"If I am approached for overdrafts, of course, there will be times when I shall have to be firm," she said.



## WOMEN WHO MATTER: *Miss H. M. Harding*

**N**EXT Monday Barclays Bank opens a new branch in Hanover Street, London, W.1, under the management of Miss Hilda Millicent Harding. This will be the first branch of any of the great British banks to have a woman in charge and it marks an important stage in the development of women's role in banking. The war stimulated all types of organisations to train women for jobs that have traditionally been performed by men and, unlike some other concerns, Barclays has continued the wartime policy into the peace years. A number of women now hold executive appointments within the bank—the definition of these is that the holders are appointed by the directors—and the natural evolution of such a situation is for women to take over branch manager-

ships. The selection of Miss Harding as a person to fill this pioneer post is, in a way, as unorthodox as her selection as a woman. Her operational experience in a branch lasted only two years while she acted as a ledger clerk in Henley-on-Thames between 1939 and 1941. Before that she had put in five years as a shorthand typist; and after her spell on ledgers she became secretary to the local directors at Reading. Six years later, in 1947, Miss Harding went through the Barclays training school at Wimbledon, and the following year she was transferred to head office as secretary to the senior general manager.

Miss Harding made her mark at every stage in her career and one may guess that her present appointment was foreseen as a possibility within a couple of years of her move to head office. At any rate, in 1950 she went through the course at the Administrative Staff College at Henley, and this is normally a sign that talent has been recognised. The eight years that have elapsed since she took that course may seem rather a long time to the outside observer. It has obviously not seemed unduly long to Miss Harding. The experience she gained by working for 10 years at the heart of the banking machine probably puts her in a class by herself among bank managers, and it certainly does more than make up for the lack of 15 years or so operational experience in a branch which most bank managers presumably have when they are appointed.

One of Miss Harding's advantages in the latter part of her service with Barclays has been the willingness of her colleagues, not only those in senior appointments, to help, explain and instruct. A generosity in passing on the know-how seems, from what Miss Harding says, to be

good fortune in working for people who encourage their staff to look to the wider horizon.

Because Miss Harding has known and valued good seniors she is all the more likely to prove herself to be a good senior in her new job. We think that the people working in the new Hanover Street branch will realise that pretty quickly.

There is nothing of the blue stocking about Miss Harding. She is colourful without being brash; poised and gentle—yet neither alarming nor weak; and she combines a friendly tolerance of human frailties with a determination that her execution of any job will be as free from these as she can make it.



Miss Harding will be one of some 8,000 bank managers in the country. Her job will be in essence to receive deposits from all the customers of the branch and to arrange credit for some of them. This is what banks are for, and it is their main money-making activity. Apart from the overdraft decisions, however, a bank manager's job has many facets. There is the staff management side; and there are discussions with clients on their private and their business affairs. These two fields are mighty comprehensive; perhaps they could be summarised as making up a job in personal relations, the persons concerned having a common interest in the use of money. The clients may want advice on the finance of an expanding, or a contracting, business;

on tax problems, or investments. Whatever the subject of the interview, the bank manager must be able to advise, not necessarily on the solution but on how to set about finding it. Advice on specific investments, for example, must be referred to the bank's brokers; but common sense, informed by some worldly wisdom, will let managers suggest a broad outline of investment policy.

Miss Harding, we are glad to say, came out of an inquisition on her attitude towards investment advice with flying colours. She made it clear that any client who wants to invest through the Stock Exchange will have his enquiry referred to stockbrokers. But for those who are uncertain as to the form their investments should take she has established her own balanced and sensible code. She will be guided entirely by the personal circumstances of the client—income, expectations, tax status, and the length of time for which the investment is to be made—but she will also bear in mind the importance of a liquid reserve, of a hedge against inflation, and of reducing risks through diversification. In investment matters—and others—we think that Miss Harding



## interviews

### MISS HILDA HARDING

BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN BANK MANAGER

**MONICA FURLONG reports:**

*I met Miss Harding in Barclays' new branch in Hanover Street. With its concealed pink lighting, its arm-chairs, its gold and white curtains and its magnificent arrangement of flowers, it is very different from the traditional bank.*



*Miss Harding, this branch seems to have effected a revolution in bank design. Is this your doing?*

MISS HARDING: I certainly had a hand in it and discussed it with the architect at every stage. I chose the fabrics and argued over the placing of the lighting. And I was determined to have flowers. When I first visited the site and there was nothing here at all, I stood where the door would be, pointed across the room and said, "That's where I'm going to have my flowers." It has become a joke that the bank was more or less built round them.

*But is it usual for a bank manager to have so much say in the appearance of a branch? I thought all banks were turned out to a uniform pattern.*

MISS HARDING: Barclays were very considerate. They asked me what I thought, and when they saw I was full of ideas they let me use them. It was all done by our staff architect, and when he saw what I was after he was quite marvellous. There is no reason, after all, to be blindly conservative. In the manager's office, for instance, it is usual to have oil paintings, or something like that, as decoration. There were some raised eyebrows over my china plates, but if I'm going to be here for the next twelve years or so, I want something pretty to look at.

*What did you feel when you heard you were to be the first woman bank manager in the country? Were you scared?*

MISS HARDING: No, not scared at all, at least not at first, though I could see the job was going to use my abilities up to the hilt. I was very, very happy about it. What I had

not reckoned with was the enormous amount of interest the appointment would arouse, not only in England but all over the world. I did feel rather alarmed when I found I was the subject of a press conference.

*Are there women bank managers in other parts of the world?*

MISS HARDING: Only two that I know of—one in China and another in Chicago, and I believe the Chicago bank deals only with women clients.

*Will there be more women bank managers in this country in the near future?*

MISS HARDING: Yes, I'm sure of it. Several of the other banks have told me rather ruefully that they're furious Barclays got in with the idea first.

*Why do you think women have taken so long to reach the top in banking when they've gone so far in other professions?*

MISS HARDING: Well, of course, banks are conservative, but I think it has been largely the fault of the women themselves. Before the war girls who went into banks from school at 16 or 18 often never considered taking banking seriously as a career. They felt they were just filling in time till they got married and so didn't bother to take exams and courses as the men did. And because of this there have been, until recently, few women available with the necessary qualifications and, just as important, the necessary experience of people, to take on such a job.

*What has been the reaction of your male colleagues to your appointment?*

MISS HARDING: They have been extraordinarily kind, though I believe one or two of the other managers have been scandalized at the amount I have talked to the press. They told me I had made their jobs harder because I had dissipated some of the mystery that surrounds banking!

*Yes, do bankers have to be so intimidating and mysterious?*

MISS HARDING: Well, there must be absolute secrecy over one's dealings with clients, but I don't see why it need be carried any further. I want to encourage people to come here and to feel that they can meet a friend here or use our writing-room and cloakroom when they are in London.

*You have strong competition from other banks in this area?*

MISS HARDING: Yes, Barclays weren't being condescending when they gave me this branch—it's quite a tough job. As we started here from scratch at Account No. 1, and as there are plenty of other banks round here for people to choose from, we know that the clients we have come to us because they find us efficient and friendly.

*How do men clients react to a woman manager?*

MISS HARDING: Those who opened accounts here already knew the situation and so presumably had no objection to the idea. It really makes very little difference to conducting business, you know. But I must say women have supported me most generously. I am very grateful to them.

*I believe you have men working under you. Does that work well?*

MISS HARDING: Yes, there are two men. Two men and four women. The men complain of being henpecked, but the truth is they are outrageously spoilt. They seem to be happy here.

*Would you like to see women occupy more top executive posts in this country?*

MISS HARDING: I should like to think that women who have outstanding ability have the opportunity to put it to the fullest possible use. That would seem to be economic.

# It's only 'masculine' women men hate working for



## SAYS BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN BANK MANAGER



Miss HILDA HARDING

**A**SLIM, attractive blonde named Hilda Harding will shortly start her new job—and become the first woman bank manager in Britain.

Officially, her appointment is "a natural move towards the developing responsibility of women in banking." According to a bank official, it's also an experiment—one which the directors are sure will succeed.

Miss Harding began her banking career twenty-

four years ago, as a £50-a-year shorthand typist in a provincial branch of the same bank.

Aiming for a top executive job some day, she attended the bank's training school and went through a course at the administrative staff college, rose to become ledger clerk, director's secretary, then secretary to the general manager.



Now, at forty-two, comes the latest promotion—to branch manager.

WHY WAS SHE CHOSEN? SAYS A SENIOR OFFICIAL: "BECAUSE OF HER NATURAL FLAIR, HER COMMON SENSE, READY INTELLIGENCE AND WIT. WE WERE NOT SPECIFICALLY LOOKING FOR A WOMAN;

By

ALEX

GILL

MISS HARDING WAS APPOINTED ON THE BASIS OF MERIT ONLY."

The new branch which she will manage is in the heart of London's Mayfair, surrounded by gown shops and boutiques and perfumeries—quite definitely a woman's world! She plans to make the bank a bright, friendly place, with "lots of flowers and bright, light furnishings and pastel-coloured walls. None of the old gloomy atmosphere associated with banks."



Her head clerk will be a woman, but most of her staff are men. "I think men work well with women: it's only 'masculine' women that men dislike. I've always tried to stay feminine." SHE HAS NO SPECIAL RULE FOR DEALING WITH HER CUSTOMERS. "I TRY TO BE TACTFUL AND CHARMING TO MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE, AND HOPE FOR THE BEST. I DO WANT TO BE HELPFUL—THAT'S REALLY MY JOB—AND TO MAKE PEOPLE USING MY BANK FEEL AT HOME."

According to Miss Harding, a good bank manager's office should be like a doctor's surgery, full of human problems that the manager must deal with, and people coming and going all the time.

"I hope my office is like that," she says. "If only people would realise that their bank manager is there to give advice."



# Would you trust your money to a woman?

**B**londe, elegant and attractive Mrs. Elizabeth Rivers-Bulkeley will make a determined effort next month to storm Britain's most exclusive "stag club"—the Stock Exchange.

Though she has been warned repeatedly that she doesn't stand a chance, Mrs. Rivers-Bulkeley plans to apply for membership.

If she does pull it off (and judging by the mutterings of the gentlemen in Throgmorton Street it would be a near-miracle) Mrs. Rivers-Bulkeley will be the country's first woman stockbroker.

"Already, a highly successful 'attache,' she is greatly valued by her firm and by her clients.

Membership of the Stock Exchange means more to her than just glory: it would enable her to become a partner in her firm, and give her financial advantages she cannot at present enjoy. "I am quite prepared to meet the Council half-way by giving a firm undertaking never actually to enter the trading floor," she tells me.

## Big spenders

**W**HY should the City be so set against women? There are no women stockbrokers, no women insurance underwriters at Lloyd's, no women directors on the boards of banks or insurance companies—indeed, few women

with directorships have usually done pretty well and the men who appointed them have no cause for regret.

Mrs. Ann Ford has put a lot of pep into the Bear Brand group.

Mrs. Amy Rose has proved herself a shrewd and successful take-over bidder.

Mrs. Katherine Kemp has turned out to be a very able managing director of Kemps Mercantile Offices—the company taken over by seven big hire-purchase groups in 1960 to provide a combined credit check system.

And Barclays Bank is very pleased with its women managers. Says a spokesman: "Our second appointment this month indicates the success of the experiment in fact, appointing women as managers is now a full-blown policy. This is no flash in the pan. There will be more of them."

## Old excuse

**S**pearheading the drive for more women directorships, inevitably, are the wives of top executives. They have a better chance of breaking through, and they increasingly make use of it.

But there are many others capable of climbing high—and they deserve more help than the old. Too often we hear the old excuse: "The customers and shareholders wouldn't like it."

It was the same in medicine once—it was the same with votes. And it's old-fashioned nonsense.

If women match up to top jobs in business they should be in the running for them.

**THEY SHOULD BE TRUSTED WITH OUR MONEY.**



**MISS HILDA HARDING—**  
First woman bank manager—  
and a great success.

or "bad shares," they say. "Whether you buy one or the other has nothing to do with being a woman—it's normal investment sense, and we have just as much of that as men."

The National Association of Investment Clubs tells me there are now 12 all-female member investment clubs in the country. Typical is the Olney Ladies Club, in Yorkshire. Mrs. O. Firth, its chairman, said today: "We meet once a month and discuss investment policy. We then take a vote on the share chosen. In the first year of business our portfolio showed an appreciation of 12%."

Favourite stocks? "Tesco, Elliott-Automation, N. Corah and Westland Aircraft. A successful London club, the Edgware "Ladies" Syndicate, buys for long-term capital profit and has stakes in Gussies, Metal Box, Debenhams and Books. Its members save 12s. 6d. a week each and invest at £50

WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC EYE, 1952-62—I: SOME NOTABLE LANDMARKS.



**OXFORD UNIVERSITY'S FIRST WOMAN PROCTOR: DR. ELIZABETH WHITEMAN.**  
In February 1960, Dr. Elizabeth Whiteman, Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, was elected to be Oxford University's first woman Proctor. She had the official title of Representative of Women's Colleges.



**THE FIRST WOMAN DEPUTY KEEPER IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM: DR. H. M. MUIR-WOOD.**  
In August, 1955, Dr. Helen M. Muir-Wood, who joined the Department of Geology in the British Museum (Natural History) in 1922, was promoted from principal scientific officer to be Deputy Keeper of the Department—the first woman to reach this rank.



**THE FIRST WOMAN RECORDER: MISS ROSE HEILBRON, Q.C.**  
It was announced by the Lord Chancellor's Office on November 26, 1956, that Miss Rose Heilbron, Q.C., had been appointed Recorder of Burnley, the first time that a woman had been appointed a Recorder. Miss Heilbron took silk in 1949.



**THE FIRST WOMAN FULL M.I.C.E. MISS M. FERGUSON.**  
The election was announced on January 15, 1957, of Miss Mary Isolen Ferguson to be a full member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the first woman so to be honoured. She was a partner in a Scottish firm of consulting engineers.



**FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES: DR. JOAN EVANS.**  
In Spring, 1959, Dr. Joan Evans was elected to succeed Sir Mortimer Wheeler as President of the Society of Antiquaries, being the first woman to hold this office. Dr. Evans was educated at St. High's College, Oxford, and is a prolific author.



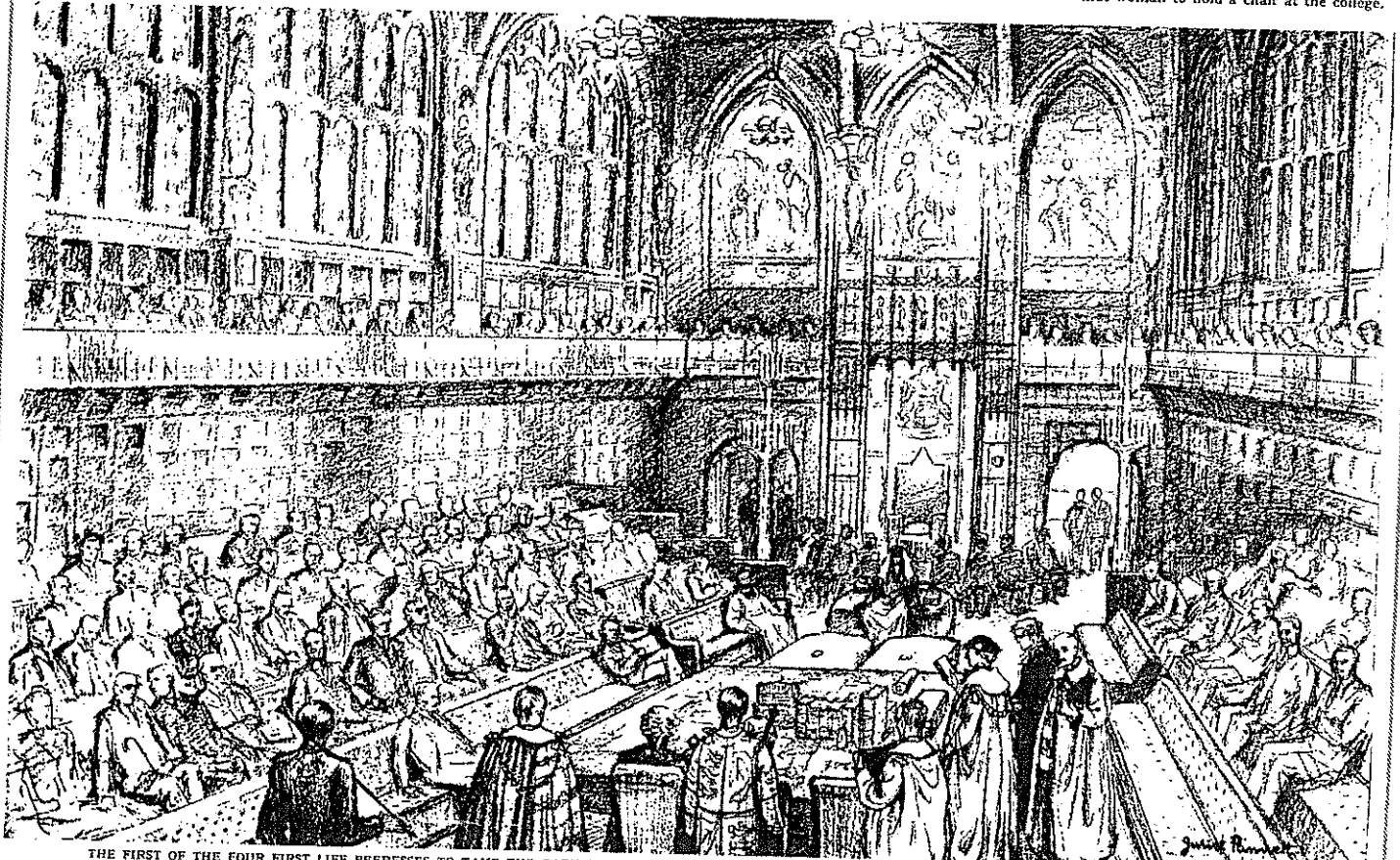
**GREAT BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN BANK MANAGER: MISS HILDA HARDING.**  
In May, 1958, 42-year-old Miss Hilda Harding was appointed Britain's first bank manager by Barclay's Bank (which she had joined as a shorthand-typist in 1934). She took up her appointment in December 1958 in Hanover Square, Mayfair.



**THE FIRST WOMAN DELEGATE OF THE O.U.P.: MISS HELEN GARDNER.**  
Miss Helen Gardner, Professorial Fellow of St. Hilda's College, Oxford, was appointed in October 1959, to be a Delegate of the Oxford University Press, the first woman to be so appointed, the appointment being for seven years.



**THE FIRST WOMAN PROFESSOR AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE: DR. HELEN PORTER.**  
Dr. Helen Porter, who is the twelfth woman Fellow of the Royal Society, was appointed in January 1959 to the Chair of Plant Physiology at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London—the first woman to hold a chair at the college.



**THE FIRST OF THE FOUR FIRST LIFE PEERESSES TO TAKE THE OATH IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS: BARONESS SWANBOROUGH (THE DOWAGER MARCHIONESS OF READING).**  
This drawing made by Mrs. Juliet Pannett, who was present during the ceremony on Oct. 21, 1958, records the first appearance of Life Peeresses in the Houses of Parliament. Immediately after Lady Swaunborough, Baroness Wootton (Mrs. Barbara Wootton) took the oath; and the following day Baroness Elliott (Mrs. Walter Elliott) and Baroness Ravensdale of Kedleston.

DORIS HASENFRATZ

*25.11.1950*

TEL. 7 29 49

ASCONA (Suisse)  
Tessin

## Eine Frau leitet Bankfiliale

Das international bekannte englische Bankhaus Barclay ernannte vor kurzem Hilda Harding zur Leiterin der neu eröffneten Filiale in Hannoverstreet im Londoner Westend. Damit wurde eine neue Bresche für die Karriere von Frauen im Bankfach geschlagen. Die 43jährige, blonde Hilda Harding ist der erste weibliche «Bankmanager» in England.

Vor 25 Jahren trat sie als Stenotypistin in einer Filiale der gleichen Bank in der Provinz ein. Dort war schon ihre Schwester tätig, und da gerade eine Stelle zu besetzen war, hielt Hildas Mutter es für richtig, dass auch Hilda den gleichen Beruf ergriff. Damals verdiente sie 50 Pfund im Jahr — ihr heutiges Einkommen ist 2000 Pfund.

Hilda hatte Glück. Ihr damaliger Vorgesetzter, der ihre Intelligenz erkannte, führte der Achtzehnjährigen die Vielfalt des Bankgeschäftes vor Augen. Bald tauschte sie die Schreibmaschine gegen das Buchhaltungsbuch ein. Sie gewann Freude und Interesse an Bankgeschäften. Sehr schnell avancierte sie zur Privatsekretärin in einer Barclay-Filiale in der Londoner City. Sie hatte keinerlei Vor- oder Ausbildung genossen, so wurde sie von der Bank auf eine Bankschule in Wimbledon geschickt, der später, im Jahre 1950, eine Spezialausbildung an einem College in Henley folgte, wo sie alles lernte,

was mit höherer Geschäftsführung und Organisation zu tun hatte.

Hilda ist gross und schlank, sie hat jene selbstverständliche Liebenswürdigkeit und Selbstverständlichkeit, die so typisch für den englischen Menschen sind. «Es schadet nichts, wenn etwas weiblicher Einfluss in den strengen Bankberuf kommt», meinte sie mir gegenüber, «Männer machen so gern ein Mysterium aus Geldgeschäften, aber es ist wirklich keines. Jeder kann es lernen.» Gemeinsam mit dem Architekten hat Hilda Harding die Ausstattung der neuen Filiale arrangiert. Neuartig für einen Bankbetrieb ist die Einrichtung eines kleinen Damenschreibzimmers mit anschliessendem Puder- und Toilettenraum. Frauen, die in der Stadt zu tun haben, haben das Bedürfnis, sich zurechtzumachen, meinte sie. Eine grosse weisse Vase mit herrlichen Blumen, die mit tiefblauleuchtendem Seidenstoff bezogenen Sitzmöbel aus braunem Nussbaum, der leicht farbige Anstrich der Wände, die auf ihre Anregung hin abwaschbar präpariert worden sind, vermitteln diesem Banklokal eine wohnlliche Note.

Der Geschäftsgang der von Hilda Harding geleiteten Filiale nimmt ständig zu, ein Beweis dafür, dass das Publikum einer Frau als Filialeiter nicht weniger Vertrauen entgegenbringt als einem Mann.

Doris Hasenfratz.

## WOMAN AS BANK MANAGER



Miss Hilda Harding, who is claimed to be the first woman bank manager in Britain, at her desk in the new branch of Barclays Bank in the West End of London, which opens to the public on Monday. (See From London—Page 4.)

### *Bank Managerette*

First the suffragettes, then women in the Lords, and next week the first (or so it is claimed) woman bank manager. At a party in Hanover Street to-day, where, on Monday, a new branch of Barclays Bank is going to be opened, the appointment as manager of Miss Hilda Harding, of Shiplake, who joined the bank in 1934, was celebrated. We have mentioned Miss Harding before, but not the new premises, which are designed specifically to attract women's accounts.

Their décor is in keeping with the managerial revolution the appointment of a woman to such a post implies. Mushroom pink walls and ceiling, hyacinth blue carpet, and skilfully arranged flowers undoubtedly contribute to the domestic atmosphere. But these are not all; the new bank is equipped with facilities only too strange elsewhere — a special women's writing room and a pastel-shade powder room thrown in for good measure. The credit for all this is given to Miss Harding herself, who has been supervising the decoration since the announcement of her appointment in May.

*John  
Carpenter*

# First woman bank manager is no revolutionary

THE woman who to-day became Britain's first woman bank manager smiled: "I have no revolutionary ideas," she said. Which for a woman who has started a revolution in the banking world was pretty o

Would she be more lenient on the question of overdrafts than her male counterparts? Back came the reply diplomatic: "The bank's policy will be my policy."

Who is this woman who has burst through the iron grill into what has always been a man's domain?

Miss Hilda Millicent Harding, 42, of Shiplake, near Henley-on-Thames. She will take over a new branch of Barclays Bank to be opened in Hanover-street, off Hanover-square, in December.

Twenty-four years ago, she joined Barclays as a shorthand-typist.

## Flowers in office

I noted her light navy two-piece dress with the marcasite brooch on the lapel and asked if she had any firm views on what bank managers should wear.

"I shall remain as feminine as I can. When summer dresses are in order I shall wear them."

There will be plenty of flowers in her office. Her favourite hobby is gardening and her home is on the edge of the family's eight-acre market garden.

"You will find orchids on my desk," she promised. "I like them very much."

And what does this graduate of the bank's Wimbledon training

*First woman*



## FIRST WOMAN MANAGER IN BRITISH ISLES.

PAGE 12—EVENING STANDARD

27. 11. 1958



## A new West End branch of Barclays Bank

will be opened at 13 Hanover Street, W.1 (telephone: MAYfair 9316) on Monday 1st December and the Manager, Miss Hilda Harding, will be pleased to help customers and visitors to London in any way possible.

**BARCLAYS BANK LIMITED**

See first story.