



RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

16 JULY -
15 DECEMBER
2018 **FREE**

LONDON'S PIONEERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

EXHIBITION GUIDE & EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS



Exhibition and events exploring change led by women from late 18th century onwards

Rights for Women: London's Pioneers in their Own Words

A warm welcome to Senate House Library and to *Rights for Women: London's Pioneers in their Own Words*, an exhibition exploring the lives and work of over 50 of London's female pioneers who broke barriers to drive change and establish rights for women.

The exhibition of over 80 items from our collection is on display in the Convocation Hall of the iconic Senate House Library. The library houses and cares for more than two million books, 50 named special collections and over 1,800 archival collections. It's one of the UK's largest academic libraries focused on the arts, humanities, and social sciences and holds a wealth of primary source material from the medieval period to the modern age.

I hope that you are inspired by the exhibition and accompanying events, as we give these female pioneers a platform for their words and hard-won victories. By enshrining their place in history we will ensure they continue to influence and change today's world for the better.

Dr Nick Barratt

Director, Senate House Library

Introduction

The debate around women's rights and civil liberties gained prominence in the late eighteenth century as a consequence of social and political changes across Europe. London emerged around this time as one of the main international stages for shaping and disseminating progressive ideas on liberty and justice.

This free exhibition and events season explores some of the famous and lesser known stories of over 50 women pioneers, from the late eighteenth century to present time, that used London as their platform to make their voices heard and establish equal rights for women.

Through the rare and precious books, letters, objects and photos in Senate House Library's collection both here and online, you can explore the ground-breaking work that led change in the spheres of politics, employment, education and reproductive rights.

Exhibition curated by: Dr Maria Castrillo and Mura Ghosh

Design and artwork by: Rebecca Simpson and Dorothee Olivereau

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Empowering through protest & politics

The tumultuous years that followed the French Revolution of 1789 was the catalyst for **Mary Wollstonecraft's** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in London in 1792. Considered one of the earliest and most influential manifestoes in favour of women's equality and against a conventional idea of femininity, the ideas contained in this book were greatly influenced by the emerging anti-slavery movement.

The publication of works by pioneering women who had suffered the injustice of slavery such as **Phillis Wheatley's** poems in 1773 and **Mary Prince's** autobiographical account in 1831 was unprecedented, and contributed to transforming public opinion about women and slaves. These works gave visibility to the public debate around the citizenship of women and suffrage.

Securing women's right to vote dominated the public sphere from the second half of the nineteenth century, and gained force in the early twentieth century resulting in *The Representation of the People Act 1918* and *The Equal Franchise Act 1928*. During this period, London became a hotbed of organised activism and militancy. Many influential and diverse female voices such as **Barbara Bodichon, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Emmeline Pankhurst** and **Annie Kenney** galvanised others into action, making their cause visible and harnessing support from the wider social and political spectrum.

After the vote was won, the election of the first female MPs to Parliament in 1918 and after, shook the foundations of a male-dominated political establishment. **Nancy Astor, Margaret Bondfield, Ellen Wilkinson and Eleanor Rathbone** were among the first women to enter the House of Commons. During their time in office, they championed women's rights and introduced key social reforms.

The years that followed The Second World War witnessed a gradual return to more conventional attitudes towards women's role in public life, partly motivated by a perceived need for political and social



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stability. In the 1960s and 1970s global events reignited the women's emancipation movement in London. Women's organisations linked to radical and left-wing politics led this second wave of women's liberation, with pioneers such as **Sheila Rowbotham**.

The settlement of migrant communities in London since the 1950s transformed the city into one of the most ethnically diverse metropolises in the world. Social injustice and racial tensions arose in the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the emergence of pioneering organisations such as the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent. Prominent female activists **Amrit Wilson** and **Stella Dadzie** were instrumental in steering change for women from ethnic minorities in London.

From the late twentieth century, several waves of feminist politics have fronted campaigns for equality that saw pioneers such as **Harriet Harman**, the first ever Minister for Women, establish and enshrine equal pay laws.

In more recent history, campaigns for the rights of the LGBT community, through figures such as **Sheila Jeffreys**, have added a new dimension; challenging society's perceptions of what it is to be a woman and what that means for women's equality today.

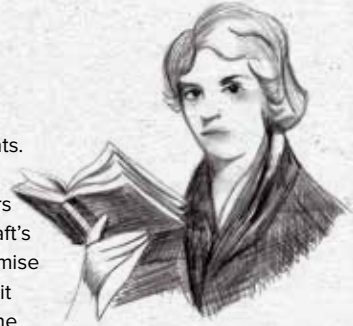
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Mary Wollstonecraft

London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1792

"I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves"

Mary Wollstonecraft was an early pioneer and advocate of women's rights. In this hugely influential book translated into several languages shortly after publication, she appealed for a radical revolution in female manners and education as the basis for her feminist ideas. Although Wollstonecraft's philosophical thought was deeply rooted in the French Revolution's promise of greater equality for humankind, she warned that to achieve this ideal it was essential that women were completely emancipated and enjoyed the same political rights as men.



Mary Wollstonecraft

The Poems of Phillis Wheatley

Phillis Wheatley

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966

"Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain, may be refin'd, and join th' angelic train"

Born in West Africa around 1753, Phillis Wheatley was transported to North America as a slave at the age of seven. She was largely tutored by the Wheatley family who had bought her. Aware of her literary talent, they continued to support her education, which was unprecedented for an enslaved person. Phillis started writing at a very young age. When she turned twenty, she accompanied her master to London, where her work was published in 1773 thus becoming the first ever published African-American female poet.



Phillis Wheatley

The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself

Mary Prince

London: F. Westley and A.H. Davies, 1831

"I have been a slave myself. I know what slaves feel. The man that says that slaves be quite happy in slavery, that they do not want to be free, that man is either ignorant or a lying person"

The idea of writing Mary Prince's story was suggested by herself. She wanted the people of England to hear from a slave what she had felt and suffered. Mary was helped in this task by English anti-abolitionist activists Susanna Strickland and Thomas Pringle, who transcribed and edited the text. Mary's direct and authentic account of her personal experience had a profound impact on London's anti-slavery circles and was reprinted three times on the same year of its publication.



Mary Prince

Letter from Sophia De Morgan concerning anti-slavery campaigning

[c.1850s]

"We believed that to confine an expression of such general feeling to women would be to deprive it of that dignity and weight"

Sophia De Morgan was a pioneer activist in the anti-slavery movement in London throughout the 1840s and 1850s. In this letter to social reformer Edwin Chadwick, she passionately argued for the men and women of England to present a united front to campaign for the abolition of slavery in the United States of America. De Morgan, like many other of her fellow campaigners, had been greatly influenced by Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Throughout her life she supported many social and educational reform causes, including women's suffrage.



Sophia De Morgan

Address of the Women of England to the Women of the United States of America on Slavery

9 November 1852

"We appeal to you as sisters, as wives, and as mothers, to raise your voices to your fellow citizens for the removal of this affliction"

The anti-slavery movement gave women the opportunity to participate in the popular campaign and gradually move towards political activism. This address shows how the women of England sought to influence debate and public opinion about the injustice of slavery through a direct appeal to their female counterparts in America. The tone and language used evoke some of the themes and arguments that will appear only a few years later in the early women's suffrage campaigns.

Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women

Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon

London: Chambers of the Social Sciences Association, 1866

"And among all the reasons for giving women votes, the one which appears to me the strongest, is that of the influence it might be expected to have in increasing public spirit"

Barbara Bodichon delivered this brief essay shortly after she formed the first Women's Suffrage Committee, and the presentation of the first women's suffrage petition to Parliament in 1866. It is a powerful text containing the key ideas that became the backbone of the women's suffrage movement in the following decades. Although Bodichon only considered giving the vote to female freeholders and householders at this stage, she felt that empowering women through participation in politics would promote responsible citizenship and benefit public life.



Barbara Bodichon

The Women's Victory and After : Personal Reminiscences

Millicent Garrett Fawcett

London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1920

"This is what we meant when we called our paper 'The Common Cause': It was the cause of men, women, and children. We believe that men cannot be truly free so long as women are held in political subjection"

Millicent Fawcett's personal account of the struggle for women's suffrage is a tribute to all the women and men who campaigned tirelessly for securing the right to vote. She describes lucidly the events and individuals that made possible the Representation of the People Act 1918. Fawcett concludes that despite this historic milestone, greater reform was required to ensure larger masses of male and female voters were included and fairly represented. Throughout her life she campaigned for women's equal rights, and championed the rights of those that suffered discrimination, including prostitutes and children.



Millicent Fawcett

Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage poster

1913

"Join the great march to London from North, South, East, or West, and show that men and women are dedicating themselves to the great cause of the enfranchisement of women"

An estimated 50,000 women converged at Hyde Park on 26 July 1913 to demand women's suffrage. The pilgrimage had been organised by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett and representing the non-militant branch of the movement also known as suffragists. Starting on 13 June, it progressed through six different routes across England and Wales. Over 46,000 signatures were collected and funds raised to support the cause. It culminated with a mass rally that showed the strength of the movement and sent a powerful message to Prime Minister Herbert Asquith.

Letter from Emmeline Pankhurst urging militants to attend a deputation to Buckingham Palace

18 May 1914

"The thought of the women who at this very moment are being tortured by forcible feeding is more than enough to rouse us into action"

Emmeline Pankhurst, the charismatic leader of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), embodied the militant branch of the women's suffrage movement also known as the suffragettes. This letter is a typical example of the protest tactics used by the WSPU to mobilise their membership and attract public attention. It is also a poignant reminder of the sufferings endured by the women who dared challenge the status quo, and which often resulted in privation of liberty and physical torture through forcible feeding.



Emmeline Pankhurst

Letter from Emmeline Pankhurst to the WSPU's membership concerning temporary suspension of militant activity

12 August 1914

"Under the joint rule of enfranchised women and men the nations of the world will, owing to women's influence and authority find a way of reconciling the claims of peace and honour"

On the outbreak of the First World War the WSPU decided to abandon its militant tactics to concentrate on the war effort and support the British government. Despite the patriotic and noble reasons for the change of direction given in this letter, the decision was controversial and led to deep internal divisions within the leadership. Secret negotiations between the government and the WSPU had led to the release of all suffragettes from prison on 10 August, only two days before this letter was sent.

Memories of a Militant

Annie Kenney

London: E. Arnold & Co., 1924

"Just as the coral reef is the work of millions of polypi, so the structure of our Movement was the work of thousands of women, who laboured silently, alone, and unacknowledged"

Annie Kenney's story is told in the first person from early childhood to the moment women's suffrage was won. Her personal account is dotted with vivid detail and descriptions of the people she encountered and the events she witnessed. Originally from Manchester, Kenney is credited for initiating the militant tactics, alongside Christabel Pankhurst, for which the suffragettes became known. Her true 'coming of age' as a suffrage activist took place in 1906 when she founded the first London WSPU branch in Canning Town.

Photograph of Emmeline Pankhurst and other suffragettes at a WSPU stall

[c.1911]

This photograph was taken at the height of Emmeline Pankhurst's popularity. She and her daughters Adele, Christabel and Sylvia ruled the WSPU with an iron fist, which earned Emmeline in particular a great deal of criticism from the membership, including her own daughter Sylvia. The image shows a stall stocked with WSPU campaign literature, including *Votes for Women*, the official organ of the WSPU, and banners asking to oppose the Liberal Government fronted by Herbert Asquith.

WSPU ephemera

[c. 1910s]

The WSPU used colour and design to create a distinctive identity. Banners, tea sets, playing cards and other objects in the purple (loyalty and dignity), white (purity) and green (hope) colours were sold at bazaars especially organised to raise funds for the cause. The piece of ribbon is embroidered with the words 'Votes for Women', one of the slogans of the WSPU. The roundel shows the clarion angel holding a banner that reads 'Freedom' and the prison gates in the background. Sylvia Pankhurst, an accomplished artist and designer, was responsible for most of these designs.



Annie Kenney

Invitation to a War Service meeting organised by the WSPU

8 July 1915

Annie Kenney was part of the Pankhursts' inner circle of collaborators. She distinguished herself as a committed activist and prolific speaker at public rallies. This invitation relates to one of the recruitment meetings and lectures where she shared a platform with Emmeline Pankhurst and other leading suffragettes to encourage trade unions and the British people to take part in the war effort. *The Suffragette*, that eventually changed its name to *Britannia*, was the channel used to advertise these events.

Letter from Eleanor Rathbone to Sophia De Morgan on social reform matters

7 February [c. 1890s]

"For women in general are quite ignorant of the character of their male associates"

This letter from Eleanor Rathbone reflects her earlier work on social reform before becoming an MP, as well as her network of connections with other socially concerned women such as Sophia De Morgan. Here she discusses at length the need to improve the living conditions of destitute women, particularly those in prison. While she acknowledges the value of religious education as a means to lift individuals from poverty, she strongly advocates a different kind of education that improves the moral and physical condition of those afflicted by deprivation.

The Case for Family Allowances

Eleanor Rathbone

Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1940

"Children, as the future citizens and workers, have a value to society which does not depend on and has no direct relation to the value of the father's work for his employer"

After becoming an MP for the Combined English Universities in 1929, Eleanor Rathbone used Parliament as a platform to make the case for family endowments. In this book she argues that to prevent child poverty, encourage lower birth rates, and improve the health of future generations it is imperative to introduce a state scheme that makes direct provision for the support of children. After much pressure from Rathbone and several women's organisations, the British wartime government eventually introduced a *Family Allowances Bill* in 1945 that contemplated making payments directly to the mother.



Nancy Astor

Nancy Astor: an Informal Biography

Maurice Collis

London: Faber & Faber, 1960

"My voice is not beautiful, but everyone can hear it. If your audience hears distinctly what you say, you'll convince them better than the best arguments they can't hear"

Nancy Astor's political career as an MP was unprecedented. In this account of her life in the public eye she is portrayed as an unusual pioneer of British politics. As well as being the first female to take her seat in the House of Commons following her election for Plymouth in 1919, she was re-elected six times until her retirement from active politics in 1945. Nancy Astor is remembered for her sharp wit and charismatic personality in a male-dominated Parliament.



Eleanor Rathbone

Rescue the Perishing

Eleanor Rathbone

London: The National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, 1943

"We ask whether Ministers who show impatience with their critics and who assure us that everything possible is being done, would feel quite so certain about that if their own wives, children or parents were among these people"

This pamphlet by Eleanor Rathbone denounces the atrocities of the Holocaust. It pleads for a robust response from the British Government to end the plight of refugees in Nazi-occupied Europe. As a founding member of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror in 1942, Rathbone put a great deal of pressure on the establishment to end the appeasement tactics and recognise the evils of a regime that was annihilating millions of innocent people. Eleanor Rathbone's humanitarian work earned her the nickname of 'MP for refugees'.

Margaret
Bondfield



A Life's Work

Margaret Bondfield

London: Hutchinson & Co, [1950]

"We bought the safety of (such as it is) of the new generation with the troubles fought through in this book"

In her autobiographical account Margaret Bondfield provides a tapestry-like picture of her life in the public sphere. She conveys the facts, events and, above all, the unique experience of a woman whose personal adventure was interwoven with the history of the labour movement in its early days. As well as being the first female member of the Privy Council, Margaret Bondfield was the first female minister and member of the cabinet. That she dedicated the book to the younger generations is testament to her lifelong commitment to social justice.



Ellen Wilkinson

Plan for Peace: How the People Can Win the Peace

Ellen Wilkinson

London: [Labour Party, 1945]

"Victory was won because the whole tremendous national effort, in harmony with that of the other United Nations, was directed and co-ordinated by a common plan"

In this pamphlet Ellen Wilkinson offers her vision for justice and peace in Britain following the end of the Second World War. Written and published shortly before the 1945 general election that returned her as a Labour MP once again for the fourth time, it reads like a programme for government that puts hard-working ordinary citizens at the heart of economic and social policies. The booklet encapsulates Wilkinson's political convictions since she became a national figure in the fight for women's and workers' rights.

Women's Liberation and the New Politics

Sheila Rowbotham
Nottingham: The Bertrand Russell Peace
Foundation, 1971

"The so-called women's question is a whole people question. The creation of a new woman of necessity demands the creation of a new man"

Sheila Rowbotham's pamphlet became the most influential manifesto in the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain throughout the 1960s and 1970s. She argued that women's emancipation was a collective issue and relevant to the whole society. Here she examines the social and economic nature of women's oppression and the possible routes to liberation. Furthermore, she questions some Marxist approaches to the women's question. With this booklet Rowbotham aimed to open up debate rather than provide final answers to a very complex issue.



Sheila
Rowbotham

Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain

Amrit Wilson
London: Virago, 1978

"I felt that Asian women had so much to tell, I wanted to write a book in which they could express their opinions and feelings. I wanted to show how Asian women are quite capable of speaking for themselves"

Amrit Wilson is a pioneering activist and writer who championed women's rights in the 1970s, setting up the first refuge run by and for Asian women. Wilson's book provides an account of the lives, struggles and aspirations of Asian women in Britain, based on interviews conducted by her with a wide range of women in London and beyond. She weaves compelling, fascinating and often moving life stories that explore attitudes towards love and marriage, family relationships and friendships, and the experience of institutionalised racism in housing, work, education, and at the hands of the law. The book was awarded the Martin Luther Memorial Prize shortly after publication.



Amrit Wilson



Stella Dadzie

The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain

Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie & Suzanne Scafe
London: Virago, 1985

"When we first came together to write this book, it was because we felt that it was high time we started to record 'our' version of events, from where we stood as Black women in Britain in the 1980s"

This seminal book co-authored by three pioneering activists of Black women's rights, celebrates Afro-Caribbean women's contribution to British society and culture. It draws from personal accounts of women from different backgrounds and generations who talk with clarity, determination and confidence about their experiences of life, work, education and family. Their stories and voices are interwoven with the rich historical analysis that provides context to these narratives and their central place in recent British history.

Winning for Women

Harriet Harman & Deborah Mattinson
London: Fabian Society, 2000

"There are also pragmatic reasons for increasing the representation of women in Parliament. Women like to see women politicians and are less likely to vote for a Labour Party that appeared to be male-orientated"

This pamphlet lays out a vision for placing women's equality at the heart of the Labour Party's agenda. Although it acknowledges significant steps taken to reduce the gender gap since the party was returned to power in 1997, it argues for the implementation of policies that matter to women and advance equality in an inclusive way. Harman and Mattinson advocate changes in the way women are represented within the party structure. More crucially, they argue that delivering for women is not only essential to the party's electoral success, but to fulfilling Labour's aims and objectives.



Harriet Harman

A Woman's Work

Harriet Harman
London: Allen Lane, 2017

"Women were thoroughly constrained, told what we could do and, more often, couldn't do. And I, along with many young women back then, had an equally strong corresponding conviction that we weren't going to put up with it"

Harriet Harman is Britain's longest serving MP and a pioneer of women's rights. Her autobiography is testament to her lifelong commitment to feminist politics and the part she has played in the movement for women's equality over the past thirty years. Harman became the first ever Minister for Women and Equality in 2007, and has occupied senior positions in government and the opposition. This book is more than a personal account of her political life. It is a call for further action to ensure the fight for equality is carried forward by the next generation of women activists.



Sheila Jeffreys

Gender Hurts: a Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism

Sheila Jeffreys
Routledge: Oxford, 2014

"The new wave of feminist activism that seeks to abolish gender is on a direct collision course with the protection of gender. There will be interesting times ahead"

Sheila Jeffrey's provocative perspective on trans issues examines the consequences of the legal, political and social developments that have recently led to the acceptance of transgender rights. She comments on the effects of transgender matters on the LGBT community, partners and family as well as children who identify as transgender. Her work is one of the first published academic books to explore transgender rights and what that means for women's rights, offering a controversial view on the emerging debate around this complex and sensitive subject. *Gender Hurts* is a particular perspective and alternative views on this subject are part of an increasingly public and international discussion.

Leading through learning

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, female educationists led the way by advocating radical changes and equality in the provision of women's education from school age to university.

London-born **Dorothea Beale** championed the reform of girls' education in England, and promoted the training of teachers as a means to improve the quality of school tuition. **Frances Mary Buss**, a friend and contemporary of Beale's, founded pioneering educational establishments for girls in London and campaigned for women to sit public examinations and access universities.

The foundation of Bedford College in 1849, the first higher education college for women in the United Kingdom, marked an important development in education for women. **Emily Davies'** ground-breaking work laid the foundations for extending professional and university education to women on the same terms as men. She challenged the established belief that women's education should be limited to accomplishments instead of proper intellectual work.

These women's tireless campaigning and combined efforts contributed to further changes in the higher education system, with the University of London being the first to approve a special examination for women in 1868. A year later **Sarah Jane Moody, Eliza Orme, Louisa von Glehn, Kate Spiller, Isabella de Lancy West, Susannah Wood, Mary Ann Belcher, Hendilah Lawrence** and **Mary Baker Watson** sat the exam for the first time.

In 1878, following campaigns and calls for deeper reforms, the admission of women to University of London degrees and matriculation examinations on the same terms as men was granted. Women in the medical profession such as **Sophia Jex-Blake** and **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** were pivotal in breaking the barriers that stood between women and equal access to university.



The establishment of College Hall in 1882 by a group of leading suffragists and educational reformers was another important milestone in the advancement of women's higher education. As a residential college, it provided accommodation as well as a shared space for exchanging ideas and promoting intellectual work. Pioneers such as **Mary Brodrick**, archaeologist, **Rukhmabai**, Indian doctor and feminist, **Elizabeth Blackwell**, doctor, and **Clara Collet**, social reformer, were some of the first residents who became leaders in their professional fields.

Opening up routes to learning and training for women in other areas of education and for those of less advantageous upbringing was led by a network of pioneering women. **Elizabeth Malleson** was founder of the Ladies' London Emancipation Society and Working Women's College in Bloomsbury. **Clara Grant**, shocked at the level of destitution in East London, set up schools for young children to improve primary level education. **Elizabeth Gilbert** was a pioneer of education for the blind, firstly for men in 1854 and from 1857 for women, and co-founded the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind, which still exists today as CLARITY.

Although a great deal has been achieved since the early days of these pioneers, the debate has continued in recent years towards the eradication of sexism in the educational system to gain full equality.

Reports Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls, with a Preface by Dorothea Beale

London: D. Nutt, 1869

"I believe one great cause of the difficulty we find in reforming the education of girls is the tyranny of custom" (Dorothea Beale)

In 1865 Dorothea Beale, pioneering educationist and headmistress, was appointed to provide evidence before the endowed schools inquiry commission. She was assisted in this task by other leading educationists including Emily Davies, Frances Mary Buss and Elizabeth Wolstenholme. The report here, which includes a preface by Beale, exposed the low standard of girls' secondary education in England before 1870. One of the causes for such state of affairs was the absence of specialised training for teachers, a problem that Beale sought to address by founding St. Hilda's College in 1877, the first residential training college for secondary school women teachers in England.



The Higher Education of Women

Emily Davies

London: A. Strahan, 1866

"If it be admitted that the law of human duty is the same for both sexes, it appears to follow that the education required is likely to be, in its broader and more essential features, the same"

Emily Davies was one of the most prominent advocates and campaigners for reforming women's access to education and for the development of teaching qualifications. In this book she explores gender inequalities in education and contemporary attitudes towards female higher education. The text became very influential in the campaigns to persuade the University of London to establish the special examinations for women in 1868, the first university in the UK to do so. It also helped to secure the admission of women to exams at Oxford and Cambridge.

Letter from Emily Davies to Robert Seeley concerning women's higher education

14 January 1869

"Has it ever been known in the history of mankind that men have followed any good example set by women?"

In this letter Emily Davies shares her thoughts about the teaching of history to prospective female students at Cambridge. Written only a few months before the foundation of Girton College by Davies and other pioneering female educationists, the tone of the missive is humorous and yet perceptive. Despite the potential barriers that her scheme to promote the higher education of women would meet in the conservative atmosphere at Cambridge University, Davies concluded that awarding degrees to women could only improve the institution's academic credibility.

Letter from Frances Mary Buss concerning the University of London's special examination for women

1 June 1876

"It is surely evident from the general failure that the regulations for the women's examinations were not clear to those for whom they were intended"

Frances Mary Buss was a pioneer of school education for girls. Buss' criticism towards the University of London's board of the special examination for women is an example of the barriers that female students had to overcome even after regulations to sit university exams were relaxed. In this letter, Buss reports several inconsistencies in the regulations issued for several subjects, and the disastrous consequences this might have had for the candidates had they not dared challenge the examiners at their own peril.

A History of Bedford College for Women, 1849-1937

Margaret Janson Tuke

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939

"The earlier period was that of the 'daughters at home'. Now girls, other than the daughters of the wealthy, look to support themselves"

Margaret Janson Tuke, principal of Bedford College from 1907 to 1929, was instrumental in transforming the first higher education college for women in Britain into a modern and well-resourced institution that met the needs of students and academics. This book charts the history of the college in its early days, and the developments that took place under Tuke's leadership, when it became an integral and dynamic part of the University of London. Tuke was a passionate advocate for women's education, and a firm proponent of encouraging more women to enter a variety of professions.

Elizabeth Malleson, 1828-1916

Hope Malleson

Guildford: Printed Privately, 1926

"At that time none of the facilities for self-improvement, now so abundant, existed for working women, and I was stirred to organise the same sort of educational advantages for them"

This biographical account of Elizabeth Malleson's life paints a portrait of a woman committed to achieving equality for women. Her greatest contribution was in the sphere of experimental adult education. Impressed by the level of knowledge and culture shown by the working men she and her husband taught at Great Ormond Street, Malleson felt the same opportunity should be provided to working women. In 1864 she founded the Working Women's College at 29 Queen Square, which became a co-educational establishment in 1874 and was subsequently called the College for Men and Women.

Frances Mary Buss Schools' Jubilee Record

London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900

"Try, try, try again, till you succeed, thus you show yourself a true North London girl"

Frances Mary Buss' book is a celebration of her work and dedication that culminated in the foundation of the North London Collegiate School in 1850, the first school in England to offer girls the same opportunities as boys; and the Camden School for Girls in 1871, which provided access to high quality education for girls of more modest means. Buss was remembered as a patient and sympathetic headmistress. To her each girl was a whole in whom she saw the higher possibilities, no matter what their background.

Frances Mary Buss



From 'Me' to 'We': Forty Years on Bow Common

Clara Ellen Grant
London: Grant [193-]

"Our Farthing Bundles of varied treasures evidently meet a real need, filled as they are with little human things such as children love"

Farthing Bundles

Clara Ellen Grant
London: Grant [193-]

"These pictures will convince my readers that something had to be done to help the children socially if 'school education' were not to be both cruel and ineffective"

These two autobiographical accounts encapsulate Clara Ellen Grant's lifelong commitment to improving the lives of the most disadvantaged in society. Here she tells her own story and her passion for infant school teaching in London's East End in the early decades of the twentieth century. The poverty and destitution she witnessed influenced her outlook and made her determined to address the situation. As well as transforming classroom approach to structure and punishment, Grant created a settlement for children in her own house at Fern Street, providing hot food and clothes. She is best remembered for the small bundles of toys and other objects that the children exchanged by a quarter of a penny or 'farthing'. It was this modest scheme that earned her the nickname the 'Bundle Woman of Bow'. Both books were published privately at Grant's own expense, but all the benefits were devoted to the Fern Street settlement and to other philanthropic causes.

University of London Supplemental Charter

1867

"That the said Chancellor, Vice-chancellor and Fellows should have power to cause to be able from time to time as they shall esteem expedient a special examination of women being candidates for such certificates of proficiency"

After long and protracted debates that lasted for over a decade, the University of London approved the special examination for women. The granting of a supplemental royal charter enabled the University to give permanent legal status to a very important milestone in its institutional history which still continues today. The document was produced as a high-quality calligraphy work on vellum, the material reserved for the most prestigious documents issued by the monarchy, and has the great royal seal appended to it.



Clara Ellen Grant

Elizabeth Gilbert and Her Work for the Blind

Frances Martin
London: Cassell, 1891

"The aim of every school for the blind should be to fit them to fill their station in the world; and therefore to earn their own living"

Elizabeth Gilbert's life was dedicated to overcome prejudice and superstition against the blind. She demonstrated that blind men and women were capable to work, learn and lead fulfilling lives. In 1854 she opened a small workshop in Holborn that trained and employed seven blind men. The venture was successful and soon evolved to include women and then turning into the pioneering Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind. Gilbert was an early proponent of a school for training teachers for the blind and took a keen interest in the foundation of the Normal College for the Blind. Her own charity still exists today as CLARITY.



Elizabeth Gilbert

Minutes of the Senate outlining the Special Examinations for Women

15 July 1868

The minutes of the Senate of the University of London provide a detailed description of how the special examination for women would be conducted. The exam would take place once a year on the first Monday in May. As well as meeting the academic requirements specified in the minutes, female candidates needed to demonstrate competence in all the subjects established by the University including Latin, Modern Languages, English, Mathematics, Natural Science, and Chemistry or Botany.

Minutes of the Senate of the Special Examination for Women

19 May 1869

This unique record lists the names of the first nine women who sat the special examinations for female candidates established and approved by the University of London in 1868. Although only six passed the exam, most of them had studied privately, which was an outstanding achievement at a time when barriers to access higher education were common in most British universities. This modest step contributed to enhancing the University of London's reputation as a pioneering institution for widening access to education.

Louisa MacDonald



Proposed rules of College Hall

26 July 1882

College Hall was established at 1 Byng Place, near Gordon Square, and provided accommodation for ten female students in the early days. Life in the hall was governed by a set of straight-forward progressive rules: students applying for a place were not required to provide character references; the principal could only dismiss students with approval from the governing committee; and students were entitled to have representation in the committee. This latter measure was considered unprecedented in this kind of institution at the time.

Photograph of Miss Eleanor Grove and Miss Rosa Morison

[c. 1890]

Eleanor Grove and Rosa Morison became the first principal and vice-principal of College Hall for female students, shortly after its foundation in 1882. Miss Grove offered to take on the post without a salary during the first year. Both of them lived in the hall of residence and were part of the committee that ran the college. This photograph captures their very close personal and professional bond, which ensured the institution became a success from the very beginning.

Address by Louisa MacDonald on the resignation of Miss Grove and Miss Morison

15 October 1900

"At first we had very little inward life, but gradually it grew, and students began to feel that the Hall was a place where the best kind of life might be going on, the life of workers together, helping each other to perfect work"

This vote of thanks was presented to Eleanor Grove and Rosa Morison on the occasion of their retirement from College Hall after nearly two decades at the helm. It is no coincidence that the address was delivered by pioneering educationist and women's suffrage advocate Louisa MacDonald, a former resident herself. The document encapsulates the many achievements of the institution, which by 1900 had in its registers eighty degrees in Medicine, Arts and Science. Furthermore, it conveys the spirit of fellowship and scholarly co-operation that characterised life inside College Hall.



Mary Brodrick



Elizabeth Blackwell

Photographs of College Hall residents

[c. 1880s-1890s]

Many of the early female students who resided at College Hall were pioneers in their chosen professional fields.

Louisa MacDonald was one of the first residents of College Hall and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1884 with first class honours in Classics and honours in German. In 1886 she graduated with a Masters of Arts in Classics and immediately embarked upon a career in education giving lessons to College Hall residents. She became the founding principal of the Women's College at the University of Sydney and was a firm advocate for women's suffrage.

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States and the first female on the Medical Register of the General Medical Council. As well as pioneering the medical education of women in England and America in the nineteenth century, Blackwell was involved in many social reforms.

Rukhmabai graduated as a Doctor of Medicine from the London School of Medicine for Women in 1894, she became one of the first practicing female doctors in India at the beginning of the twentieth century. She was involved in a high profile legal case relating to her marriage as a child bride in 1884, which eventually led to the *Age of Consent Act 1891*.

Mary Brodrick was a pioneering Archaeologist and Egyptologist and one of the first female excavators in Egypt. In 1888 she entered College Hall while studying at University College London under Stuart Poole and Peter le Page Renouf.



Rukhmabai

Memorial of the Executive Committee of the Ladies' Educational Association

18 April 1874

"It is very desirable to obtain from the Crown a new charter, which may enable the Senate to admit women to any of the ordinary examinations for degrees"

The Ladies' Educational Association of London was founded in 1869 to expand women's access to higher education, setting up classes for women at University College. In 1874 three hundred and fifteen women had attended the session. In this memorial sent to the University of London, the Association made the case for opening up the ordinary examinations to women on the same terms as men. Leading educationists including Elizabeth Malleon, Frances Martin and Millicent Garrett Fawcett were among the signatories of the document.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson



Memorial signed by women doctors addressed to the University of London

June 1877

“The present is a fitting time for extending to women the incentive to wide and patient study which is afforded by the high standard of the London degree”

The struggle to fully extend ordinary examinations and degrees to women continued into the later part of the 19th century. This memorial signed by pioneering female doctors including Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Sophia-Jex Blake acknowledges and celebrates the University of London’s resolution to admit women to medical examinations. It also calls for a new charter to give full legal status to a long fought right that would significantly improve women’s opportunities to access higher education.

Measuring the Mind: Beatrice Edgell Pioneer Woman Psychologist of Bedford College

Elizabeth R. Valentine
Royal Holloway, University of London, 2004

“The position of women in these Universities is one to fill any woman with great thankfulness towards those, who through the fifties, sixties and seventies of the last century, worked so hard to win for women the privileges of higher education” (Beatrice Edgell)

A woman of many firsts, Beatrice Edgell was, above all, an exceptional educator, who cared deeply about the education, welfare and careers of her female students. She taught Psychology for thirty-five years at Bedford College, where she set up one of Britain’s first psychological laboratories. She was the first British woman to earn a doctorate in Psychology in 1901 and the first female professor of Psychology in Britain in 1927 at the University of London.

She was also the first female president of the British Psychological Society, the Aristotelian Society, the Mind Association and the Psychological Division of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Medical Women

Sophia Jex-Blake
London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1886

“When women are once practising medicine in large numbers, great gain may accrue to medical science from the observations and discoveries which their sex will give them”

Sophia Jex-Blake was a pioneering female doctor and one of the strongest advocates for women’s access to medical education. Her personal story is intertwined with the campaigns she led in Edinburgh and London to achieve equality in this field. Firstly published in 1872, the second edition of this book was released twenty two years later by which point Sophia Jex-Blake had been involved in the foundation of two schools of medicine for women in London and Edinburgh. As well as reflecting on medicine as a profession for women, Jex-Blake also highlights their contribution to medical science throughout history.

Sophia Jex-Blake



Beatrice Edgell



A New World for Women - Stella Browne: Socialist Feminist Sheila Rowbotham



Louisa Mac Donald



Rukhmabai



Emmeline Pankhurst and Suffragettes



Early Female Students



Suffragettes ribbon



Health of Working Girls
Beatrice Webb



The Women's Victory and After: Personal Reminiscences
Millicent Garrett Fawcett

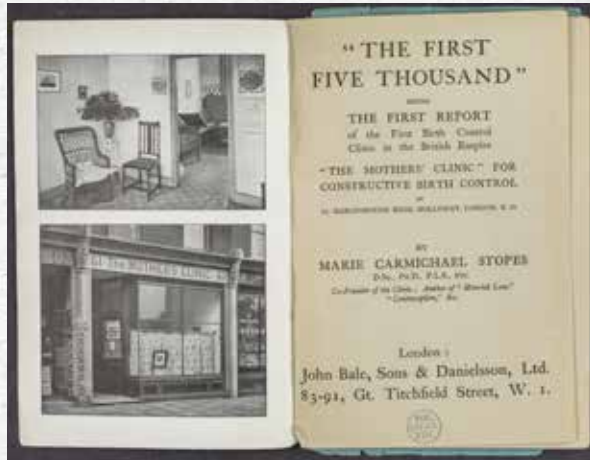
Clara Collet



Louise Creighton



Labour and Life of the People of London



"The First Five Thousand": Being the First Report of the First Birth Control Clinic in the British Empire



Working-class Wives
Margery Spring Rice



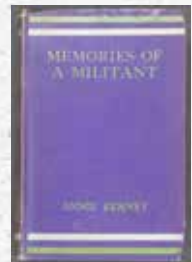
The Heart of the Race:
Black Women's Lives
in Britain
Beverly Bryan, Stella
Dadzie & Suzanne
Scafe



Our Ostriches: a Play
of Modern Life in Three
Acts
Marie Carmichael
Stopes



The Tamarisk Tree
Dora Russell



Memories of a Militant
Annie Kenney

Working for Justice

For most of the nineteenth century, women had very little economically recognised productive importance in society. They faced many prejudices in the work world, in terms of the positions they could hope to obtain, their levels of pay, and their status. Emerging male-dominated trade unions were unsympathetic towards ‘the problem of female labour’.

Emma Paterson was the first woman delegate to attend the Trades Union Congress (TUC). She founded the Women’s Protective and Provident Association in 1874, which became the Women’s Trade Union League, a central body to help establish women-only unions.

The more radical figures in the Women’s Trade Union League, such as **Clementina Black**, championed the grossly exploited, unskilled women factory workers. She was one of the vehement supporters of the 1888 London matchgirls’ strike and the newly created Matchmakers Union. As a delegate to the TUC that year, she initiated the historic resolution for equal pay for women workers.

Helen Bosanquet, social theorist and organiser of the Charity Organisation Society, wrote extensively on poverty and the economics of wages. **Louise Creighton**, activist, was the first president of the National Union of Women Workers in 1885, an association that co-ordinated voluntary efforts of women within society. **Beatrice Webb**, prolific author, helped create the London School of Economics and the Fabian Society, and coined the term ‘collective bargaining’. **Clara Collet**, social reformer, was pivotal in improving working conditions and pay for women in the early twentieth century. **Beatrice Webb** and **Clara Collet** wrote chapters for Charles Booth’s pioneering work *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1889-1891).



Mary Macarthur and **Gertrude Tuckwell** organised women to join the National Federation of Women Workers and campaigned tirelessly for minimum wages for women in trades. **Barbara Drake** produced a highly influential book, *Women in Trade Unions* (1920), under the auspices of the Labour Research Department and the Fabian Women's Group.

Pioneering women in the professional world were critical to breaking barriers and enshrining women's rights, especially in areas such as publishing and journalism. **Virginia Woolf**, pioneer of modernist literature, and **Christina Broom**, the UK's first female press photographer and pioneer of London photography, gave voice and images to the movement, shedding light on the oppression of women. This movement resurfaced during the Second World War through pioneers such as **Una Marson**, writer and the first Black woman broadcaster at the BBC, who discussed global gender/race equality issues.

Margaret Busby, Britain's youngest and first black woman publisher and broadcaster, and **Carmen Callil**, head of London-based feminist publishing house Virago Press, offered a platform to a diverse range of women writers and kept the feminist movement in the public eye during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s.

As Employment Minister, **Barbara Castle** helped negotiate equal pay for women workers after the 1968 Ford Dagenham plant strike. She was the architect of *The Equal Pay Act 1970*.

Recent revelations regarding wage disparity between men and women illuminate the ongoing struggle for women's equality.

Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-1924

Margaret Cole (Ed.)

London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952

"It would be curious to discover who it is to whom one writes in a diary. Possibly to some mysterious personification of one's own identity"

Beatrice Webb (née Potter) was a prolific and prominent writer pioneering social research into the lives of the poor. She was among the founders of the London School of Economics and the Fabian Society. Webb kept an extensive diary for seventy years from 1873 until her death in 1943, which reveals her ambivalence towards the 'woman question':

"At the root of my anti-feminism lay the fact that I had never myself suffered the disabilities assumed to arise from my sex."

The Wages of Men and Women: Should They Be Equal?

Mrs. Sidney Webb

London: The Fabian Society, 1919

"I am irresistibly led to the conclusion that the national minimum wage, which the Legislature should secure for all adult workers whilst in employment, cannot be other than identical for both sexes"

Health of Working Girls

Beatrice Webb

London: Blackie and Son, 1917

These two works arise from Beatrice Webb's investigations for the War Committee on Women in Industry into the health and wages of female munitions workers.

Photograph of Beatrice Webb with Booth family

Gracedieu, Thringstone, 1888

"A pleasant visit to Gracedieu colloquing in the old way with Charles Booth as to the proper course of the poor law enquiry"

Beatrice Webb (née Potter) was Charles Booth's wife's cousin. She developed a long standing professional relationship with Charles Booth.



My Apprenticeship

Beatrice Webb

London: Longmans, 1946

"If I had been a man, self-respect, family pressure and the public opinion of my class would have pushed me into a money-making profession; as a mere woman I could carve out a career of disinterested research"

Beatrice Webb's only autobiographical work, based on her diary, is considered to be the first British woman's memoir to be written in the mode of the Victorian autobiography of self and society. *My Apprenticeship* was first published in 1926 and is a brilliant examination of the main social and intellectual movements of the 1880s and 1890s that propelled Webb to her productive life as a woman and professional. The book tells the story of Webb's "Craft of a 'social investigator' growing out of the creed by which to live".

Educated Working Women

Clara Elizabeth Collet
London: P.S. King, 1902

"We owe much to the women who, at the risk of great unpopularity and much social loss, fought the battles by which the doors were opened, through which others passed without one effort of their own"

Clara Collet was a pioneering social investigator, social reformer and writer. As a civil servant in the Board of Trade, she was pivotal in effecting many reforms which greatly improved working conditions and pay for women during the early part of the twentieth century. She was considered the expert in women's work in Britain at the time. Dedicated in memoriam to Frances Mary Buss, headmistress of North London Collegiate School, one of the most liberated schools for girls, which Clara attended, the book displayed here contains six essays on the economic position of women workers.

Photograph of Clara Collet

[c. 1880s]

Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls

Clara Elizabeth Collet
London: Printed for H.M. Stationery off., by Eyre, 1894

"The questions which have to be considered in connexion with the employment of women can very rarely be answered by reference to economic or industrial conditions alone. Social conditions are generally of primary importance"

This report is a collection of statistical and descriptive evidence of life for working women and poor people in London and elsewhere in England, prepared by Clara Collet for the Labour Department.

Clara Collet



Letter from Clara E. Collet to Charles Booth

London, 23rd October 1903

Labour and Life of the People in London

Charles Booth (with contributions from Beatrice Webb and Clara Collet)
London; New York: Macmillan, 1892-97

Beatrice Webb and Clara Collet each worked as investigators for Charles Booth's survey of the poor and working classes in London. They both wrote chapters in his masterpiece *Labour and Life of the People of London*. Booth asked Webb to document the work undertaken by women in London, however she chose to write about the dock workers and Jewish residents of London's East End. Booth then turned to Clara Collet. She took up residency in the East End in 1888 where she interviewed prostitutes and women from sweated trades. This was an exquisite piece of research, which she used to write her substantial section on 'Women's Work'.

The Position of Women in Industry

Helen Bosanquet (née Dendy)
London: Macmillan, 1895

“The working-women of England are indeed in a very sorry plight, and that if knights-errant were still to the fore they would find work enough for lance and sword in freeing their sisters from the tyranny by which they are oppressed”

The Economics of Women’s Work and Wages

Mrs. Helen Bosanquet
London: P.S. King & Son, [c.1907]

“The various phenomena described as ‘working for pocket-money wages,’ ‘underselling,’ the ‘subsidising of wages’ are all different aspects of the fact that to a large extent women’s earnings are still regarded as only subsidiary sources of income”

Helen Bosanquet was best known as a leader of the Charity Organisation Society and for her book *Social Work in London 1869–1912* (published in 1914) which laid the foundations of the social work profession. She was active in founding a social work training programme at Bedford College and Women’s University Settlement. A well-informed commentator on family and working-class poverty, she was outspoken about the burdens that disenfranchisement placed on poor working women, as the books on display demonstrate. Helen Bosanquet and Beatrice Webb were both a major influence on the Poor Law Report, 1909.



Helen Bosanquet



Louise Creighton

Memoir of a Victorian Woman

Louise Creighton
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994

“This was the beginning of N.U.W.W. It was a great joy & surprise to find amongst this collection of rather ordinary looking middle-aged women so much intelligence, capacity & zeal”

A popular author and an early influential advocate for a greater role of women in society and later for women’s suffrage, Louise Creighton founded the National Union of Women Workers in 1885 and was its first president. The explicit aim of NUWW was to co-ordinate the voluntary efforts of women around the country and to promote a greater unity of purpose for their causes. Later the organisation changed its name to the National Council of Women of Great Britain. Creighton passed with honours the first University of London higher examination for women.

The Position of Working Women, and How to Improve It

Emma A. Paterson
London, 1874

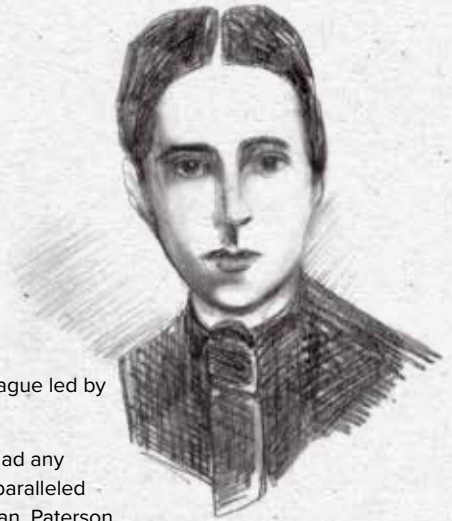
“The fear that the employment of women will lower their wages has led the men to pass rules in many of their trade societies positively forbidding their members to work with women”

A Song for Women

Annie Matheson
[c.1880s]

Issued as a leaflet by the Women’s Protective & Provident League led by Emma Paterson.

Emma Paterson is described as the ‘only early feminist who had any knowledge of trade union problems’ and who has had an unparalleled influence on the trade union movement. A middle-class woman, Paterson worked to encourage the formation of trade unions for women workers in predominantly female occupations at a time when women were shut out of the traditional trade unions. In 1874 she founded the Women’s Protective and Provident League and edited its *Women’s Union Journal*. Paterson was one of the two first ever female delegates to the Trades Union Congress in 1875 representing the Society of Women Bookbinders and the Society of Women Upholsters.



Emma Paterson

Makers of Our Clothes

Mrs Carl Meyer and Clementina Black
London: Duckworth, 1909

“Of the shirt trade, then, we may say that it contains a number of workers paid at rates which do indeed support life but support it upon so low a level as to render unattainable all that gives savour to existence”

A radical feminist and writer, Clementina Black was one of the earliest female trade unionists, concerned with the welfare of the poorest working women. She travelled around the country persuading them to join trade unions and in 1886 she became the Honorary Secretary of the militant Women’s Trade Union League. Black was one of the organisers of the London matchgirls’ strike of 1888 about working conditions. She moved the first successful equal-pay resolution at the Trades Union Congress in 1888. She saw low wages as the root of the problem for female workers and campaigned for a legal minimum wage.



Clementina Black

Women's Opportunity

Gertrude M. Tuckwell

London: Women's Trade Union League, [c.1905]

"It is natural to turn from the question of franchise to that of the wages of women, for one of the points over which much suffrage controversy has raged is that of the numbers of those who would as householders or as lodgers possess qualifications for a vote"

Known mainly as London's first woman magistrate and one of the seven women to be appointed Justice of the Peace, Gertrude Tuckwell held radical views on the health and pay of women in the sweated trades. In this work, she advocated for women factory inspectors, for a minimum wage and for protection of women workers from industrial accidents and diseases. She believed in equal pay for equal work. Tuckwell was a long term member of the Women's Trade Union League, whose president she became in 1905. She also led the National Federation of Women Workers for a decade after she became its president in 1908.



Mary MacArthur

Women in Trade Unions

Barbara Drake

London: Virago, 1984

"The root problem of women in trade unions is a wages problem. Its solutions will finally banish from industry the old suspicions and prejudices which set men and women in antagonism and retard the growth of labour solidarity"

Women in Trade Unions was first published in 1920 and has become a classic in the history of women and trade unionism, making Barbara Drake one of the more comprehensive of the earliest researchers to examine women's roles in labour movements. Drake was inspired by her aunt, Beatrice Webb, in revealing the dangerous working conditions of women workers in many trades. She produced this work under the auspices of the Labour Research Department and the Fabian Women's Group.



Gertrude Tuckwell

Woman in Industry from Seven Points of View

Gertrude Tuckwell and Mary MacArthur (Et al.)

London: Duckworth, 1908

"The unorganised woman is even more powerless than the unorganised man; she is more pliable, more inclined to underestimate her own value (industrially), and, I think, on the whole more conscientious" (Mary MacArthur)

Mary MacArthur was one of the strongest pioneering voices in the fight for working class women to organise into unions and to access the vote. She founded the National Federation of Women Workers in 1906, which was, under her leadership, the most successful body for the promotion of women's trade unionism at the time. Aided by the highly influential monthly publication she founded in 1907, *The Woman Worker*, MacArthur and other female trade union activists fought for better working conditions for women and for recognition from the general labour unions. The articles in the book displayed here are based on public lectures they gave on the general question of women's position in industry.

Politics and Power: Barbara Castle: a Biography

Lisa Martineau

London: Deutsch, 2000

[With extracts from *The Castle Diaries*]

Barbara Castle



Red Queen

Anne Perkins

London: Macmillan, 2003

[With extracts from *The Castle Diaries*]

Barbara Castle fought her way into the largely male-dominated world of politics to become one of the most significant Labour Party politicians of the twentieth century. She is most warmly remembered for her introduction of the *Equal Pay Act 1970*. This breakthrough followed a major women's strike in 1968 at Ford's Dagenham Factory over a regrading demand, which Castle helped to partially solve by raising the women's pay to 92% of the male rate. In Parliament she shrewdly introduced the *Equal Pay Act 1970* "as a measure of efficiency as well as equality" rather than a victory for women's liberation and militant feminism to ensure its success.

The Life of Una Marson

Delia Jarrett-Macauley

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998

"I am convinced that the future progress in the West Indies is largely in the hands of women; though women can contribute a good deal to their country's welfare individually, it is through solid organisation that they can be most useful"

The Moth and the Star

Una Marson

Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I.: The author, 1937

Una Marson was one of the finest contributors to Caribbean literature and discourse on Black womanhood of the past century. Her feminist works were influenced greatly by the new experiences she had as a Black woman in 1930s Britain. The racism and sexism she experienced "transformed both her life and her poetry" and this is evident in the poems she published in *The Moth and the Star*. Marson was the first Black woman broadcaster at the BBC, where from 1941 she hosted and later produced the programme *Calling the West Indies* for the soldiers serving in the Second World War and their families.

Una Marson



Soldiers and suffragettes

Christina Broom

London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2015

"I have photographed all the King's horses and all the King's men, and I am never happier than when I am with my camera among the crack regiments of Britain"

Britain's first female press photographer, Christina Broom, captured some of the most extraordinary events of the early twentieth century during a career spanning three decades. Self-taught at 40 years old, Broom was drawn to group composition of people and detail. She had an uncanny ability to place herself and her camera close up, within parades and processions, unusual for a female photographer of her time. Not a suffragette herself, Broom's images of the early women's rights activists, as shown here, offer a more intimate perspective of the suffrage movement.



Christina Broom

A Room of One's Own

Virginia Woolf

London: Hogarth Press, 1929

"Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind"

Virginia Woolf's book was based on a series of lectures she delivered at Girton and Newham Colleges for women, Cambridge University, in 1928. Originally self-published as a long extended essay, it is narrated in the first person by a fictional character. The text is regarded as a powerful feminist manifesto that explores women as writers and as fiction characters. In this important work Woolf argues for a space for women authors within a literary tradition often dominated by men.

Letter from Virginia Woolf to Gladys Easdale

30 March 1936

Virginia Woolf was one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century and a pioneering modernist writer whose work was largely self-published through the Hogarth Press, which she set up with her husband Leonard in 1917. Woolf cultivated many close literary friendships throughout her life as shown in this volume of manuscript correspondence. The letter on display was sent to female author Gladys Easdale, and discusses personal as well as literary matters, including the proofs of their forthcoming books.



Virginia Woolf

Works published by Allison & Busby co-founded by Margaret Busby and Clive Allison

"Is it enough to respond to a demand for books reflecting the presence of 'ethnic minorities' while perpetuating a system which does not actively encourage their involvement at all levels?" (Margaret Busby)

Margaret Busby co-founded London pioneering publishing house Allison & Busby with Clive Allison in 1967. At the age of twenty-three she became the UK's youngest and first Black female publisher. Busby was instrumental in promoting diversity within the publishing industry at a time when very few writers from the African diaspora received critical public attention. The two books on display here are examples of the titles that came out of this leading independent publisher. Although she left the company in 1987, she has continued to campaign for increasing Black representation in British publishing.

Margaret Busby



Carmen Callil

Works published by Virago Press founded by Carmen Callil

"I think somebody else would have done it [Virago] if I hadn't. It was just sitting there waiting for my generation to say, 'scuse me'" (Carmen Callil)

Carmen Callil founded Virago Press (initially known as Spare Rib Books) in 1972 as the first ever feminist publishing company run by women setting out to "*publish books which celebrated women and women's lives, and which would, by so doing, spread the message of women's liberation to the whole population*". The works of neglected writers, from Vera Brittain to Tillie Olsen, were being re-discovered, and read by an enthusiastic female readership. In less than ten years, Virago became a cultural force and its turnover reached one million in the early 80s. The books shown here are examples of some of the popular series published by Virago.

Controlling mind and body

Reproductive rights has been and continues to be one of the main issues in securing rights for women.

The modern birth control movement grew out of the nineteenth century. **Alice Drysdale-Vickery**, a physician and the first British woman to qualify as a chemist and pharmacist, was one of the founders of the Malthusian League in 1877. The League campaigned for limiting population growth through preventative measures, unifying the majority of campaigners who fought the prevailing Victorian morality on the importance of family planning.

Annie Besant, the Malthusian League's first secretary, was arrested and tried along with Charles Bradlaugh for publishing material which advocated birth control for the poor. After the trial, Besant, the first woman in Britain to support birth control publicly, made an impassioned plea for contraception in her book *Law of Population* (1877).

The year 1921 was a turning point for the birth control movement. **Marie Carmichael Stopes**, a sex education pioneer, whose book, *Married Love* (1918), had been an instant bestseller with over half a million copies, opened Mother's Clinic, the first sexual advice centre in north London. Following that, numerous Women's Welfare Centres opened in London, offering advice to working class women in poor health. **Margery Spring Rice** chaired one such clinic in North Kensington, spearheading the idea of broadening coverage to include marital problems. She co-founded the National Birth Control Association in 1931, which later became the Family Planning Association.

Throughout the 1920s, campaign momentum strengthened to persuade successive Ministers of Health to recognise birth control as essential to public health, breaking down sex taboos and increasing reproductive health knowledge. **Dora Russell** joined H. G. Wells and John Maynard



Keynes in founding the Workers' Birth Control Group. In 1926, the House of Lords was the first legislative body in the world to support birth control as part of publicly funded medical services. **Stella Browne** was one of the first women radicals to speak about the right to abortion, calling for its legalisation at the World Sexual Reform Congress in London in 1929. As a result of these women's work, the National Birth Control Council was founded in 1930.

The Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) campaigned effectively after The Second World War towards legalised abortion. However, it wouldn't gain momentum until the second wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, with large-scale sex education campaigns. In 1961, the NHS offered free contraceptive pills to married women and later *The Abortion Act 1967* was introduced. As Secretary of ALRA, **Dilys Cossey** was a leading figure in making this revolution possible. She continued to fight for free contraception on the NHS as General Secretary of the Birth Control Campaign.

50 years after *The Abortion Act 1967* was introduced, other parts of the UK with devolved governments are only just introducing abortion law reform or still continue a ban, continuing the debate on women's health and their rights.

Married Love

Marie Carmichael Stopes
New York: Eugenics Publishing Company, Inc.,
1931

"Marriage can never reach its full stature until women possess as much intellectual freedom and freedom of opportunity within it as do their partners"

Educated as a scientist, Marie Stopes gained public attention in 1918 with the publication of *Married Love*, the first sex manual aimed at women. Fired up by her experiences of sexual frustration in her first marriage, the book openly discussed sexuality and birth control within a marriage of equal partners. The book immediately became a sensation, selling millions of copies. The controversial subject of birth control was then firmly in the wider public discourse. Dr. Havelock Ellis described it as *"the most notable advance made during recent years in the knowledge of women's psycho-physiological life."*



We Burn

Marie Carmichael Stopes
London: Delamore Press, Alex. Moring Ltd. 1949

*"No one can go the way I go
No one can know the things I know"*

Less known for her poetry, Marie Stopes published several volumes in her later years. For this volume, she selected poems from *Love songs for young lovers* (Heinemann, 1939); *Oriri* (Heinemann, 1940); *Wartime harvest* (Moring, 1944); and *The Bathe* (Moring, 1946).

"The First Five Thousand": Being the First Report of the First Birth Control Clinic in the British Empire

Marie Carmichael Stopes
London: J. Bale, Sons, & Danielsson, Ltd., 1925

"In this Clinic healthy mothers obtain the key to personal security and development, to united happiness and success with their husbands in marriage and to voluntary and joyous motherhood"

After the roaring success of *Married Love*, Stopes quickly followed with *Wise Parenthood* later in 1918, a best-selling practical guide to birth control, and then *Radiant Motherhood* in 1920. She was inundated with letters from women wanting further advice. In 1921, she opened the first family planning clinic in North London as a free service for married women. Stopes was strongly opposed to termination of pregnancies and promoted birth control to women to limit their number of offspring. By 1923, her clinics were overwhelmed and she started fundraising to open more.

Our Ostriches: a Play of Modern Life in Three Acts

Marie Carmichael Stopes
London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1923

During the First World War, Marie Stopes wrote several plays with the intention to educate the public about birth control. Her first major success and the only one of her plays to reach the stage, *Our Ostriches*, ran for three months at the Royal Court Theatre. It dealt with society's approach to working class women being forced to produce babies throughout their lives. In contrast, *Vectia*, a dramatic representation of her own failed first marriage, dealing with themes of male heterosexual inadequacy and female ignorance, was banned from the stage.

The Trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh

Roger Manvell

London: Elek/Pemberton, 1976

In 1876, a 29-year old Annie Besant joined Charles Bradlaugh in re-publishing *Fruits of Philosophy*, a controversial pamphlet on the physiology of conception, written by Charles Knowlton, an American physician, some forty years earlier in 1832. Issued for only sixpence for the working class reader, their publication was a deliberate challenge to authority. Arrested and brought to court for issuing an 'obscene libel', they proceeded to defend themselves. Beatrice Webb described Besant as "*the only woman I have ever known who is a real orator, who has the gift of public persuasion*". What followed was one of the most celebrated trials of the nineteenth century. A young woman notorious as a freethinker was defending the cause of population control and contraceptive checks in open court before an all-male jury.



The Law of Population

Annie Besant

London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1887

"We work for the redemption of the poor, for the salvation of the wretched; the cause of the people is the sacredest of all causes, and is the one which is the most certain to triumph, however sharp may be the struggle for victory"

Annie Besant was instrumental in founding the Malthusian League during the trial, which became a strong voice for the abolition of penalties for the promotion of contraception. Her victory at the trial led to widespread publicity for contraception. On the strength of this, she went on to publish her own highly influential manual on ways to limit family size, polarising opinions in the media and the establishment. *The Times* accused her of writing "*an indecent, lewd, filthy, bawdy and obscene book*", whilst at the same time she gained support from liberal politicians. The scandals cost Besant the custody of her children.

Is Limitation of the Family Immoral? A Judgement on Annie Besant's "Law of Population"

W.C. Windeyer

London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1889

This Judgement is an illustration of how Annie Besant's international recognition spread in the decade following the publication and selling of her *The Law of Population* in New South Wales, Australia. The judge's verdict that "*this book is neither obscene in its language, nor by its teaching incites people to obscenity*" was hailed as "*a moral triumph for freethought*" in Australia.



Alice Drysdale Vickery

A Women's Malthusian League

Dr. Alice Drysdale Vickery
[London, ca. 1905]

"Everything points to the main responsibility as to the numbers of the family resting ultimately with women, who are so intimately affected in their persons, their pockets, their responsibilities, their daily toil and drudgery, their duties, aims and ideals"

The first British woman to qualify as a chemist and pharmacist in 1873, Alice Vickery was an outspoken supporter of birth control as a key aspect of the emancipation of women, lecturing on this topic for more than a decade, after also qualifying as a physician. After she testified at the trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, Vickery became a member of the newly formed Malthusian League, which advocated the practice of contraception and the education of the public about the importance of family planning. In her book she proposed a women's league with a programme of emancipation in ten points.

A New World for Women: Stella Browne: Socialist-Feminist

Sheila Rowbotham
London: Pluto Press, 1977

"Abortion should be available for any woman, without insolent inquisitions, nor ruinous financial charges, nor tangles of red tape. For our bodies are our own" (Stella Browne)

A fearless radical, Stella Browne is known mostly for her forceful campaigning of women's right to birth control and legalised safe abortion. She also advocated free love and wrote letters on sexuality, published anonymously in the subversive feminist journal *The Freewoman*. As early as 1931, Browne urged women to take matters of their sexuality and health into their own hands. She was the first woman to speak publicly on lesbianism. Browne was a co-founder of the Abortion Law Reform Association.



Stella Browne

Report of the Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference

London: William Heinemann (Medical Books) Ltd., 1922

"Birth Control, the diffusion of the knowledge and possibility of Birth Control, means freedom for women, social and sexual freedom, and that is why it is so intensely feared and disliked" (Stella Browne)

Dora Russell



The Tamarisk Tree

Dora Russell

London: Virago, 1980

“When I take note of some modern sex teaching I have to laugh at what we pioneers suffered over this question fifty years ago. I did not believe in concealing anything”

Dora Russell founded the Workers' Birth Control Group in 1924 with the support of Labour MPs and author H. G. Wells and campaigned within the Labour Party for birth-control clinics. She wrote considerably and was mostly concerned with sex education. Her love of motherhood and children put her at odds with fellow feminists championing women's sexual freedom against marriage. Nevertheless, her candid autobiography reveals her views on 'liberated' sex, which made her a 'new woman'. Her insights that the body is political, both in sex and in motherhood, put her ahead of her time.

Working-Class Wives

Margery Spring Rice

Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Limited, 1939

“For most trades and professions years of study and practice are necessary for efficiency but in the most important work of all, that of motherhood, the realisation is only just beginning to dawn that trained knowledge must supplement the woman's instinct”

Margery Spring Rice was a founding member of the National Birth Control Association (later known as the Family Planning Association), established in 1930 as an independent co-ordinating body to advance the birth control movement and to help clinics promote medical research. She carried out a large survey of married working women which she used in her writings to raise public concern for women's health due to frequent pregnancies, miscarriages, and gynaecological ailments. Spring Rice developed family planning clinics throughout the 1950s, where she pioneered additional services to women, from advice on psychological difficulties in marriage to infertility.



Margery Spring Rice

**Freedom to Choose: the Life and Work of
Dr Helena Wright, Pioneer of Contraception**

Barbara Evans

London: The Bodley Head, 1984

"I would rather have all the risks which come from a free discussion of sex than the greater risks we run by a conspiracy of silence" (Helena Wright)

Renowned educator, author and campaigner, Helena Wright was a pioneer of family planning in Britain and internationally. She is best remembered for *The Sex Factor in Marriage* published in 1930, a beginner's guide to sexual intercourse for married couples. It contains explicit instructions in the art of love making. Despite the fact that this was considered taboo by the vast majority, many of whom unfamiliar at the time with the scientific terminology describing human sexuality, Wright's book became a best-seller with sales of over a million and translated into many languages.

**Birth Control: Advice on Family Spacing and
Healthy Sex Life**

Helena Wright

London: Cassell, 1958

"I believe that no marriage can be managed healthily, happily and successfully without the employment of a reliable method of preventing unwanted pregnancies"

This book was pivotal in persuading the Ministry of Health to withdraw all restrictions on contraceptive services by local authorities and to set up birth control clinics throughout the country in the 1930s. Wright wrote this book in one night without sleep describing the disadvantages of the contraceptive methods currently in use against the preferred barrier methods of the time. It was first published in 1934 as part of Cassell's Health Handbook series.



Abortion and Conscientious Objection

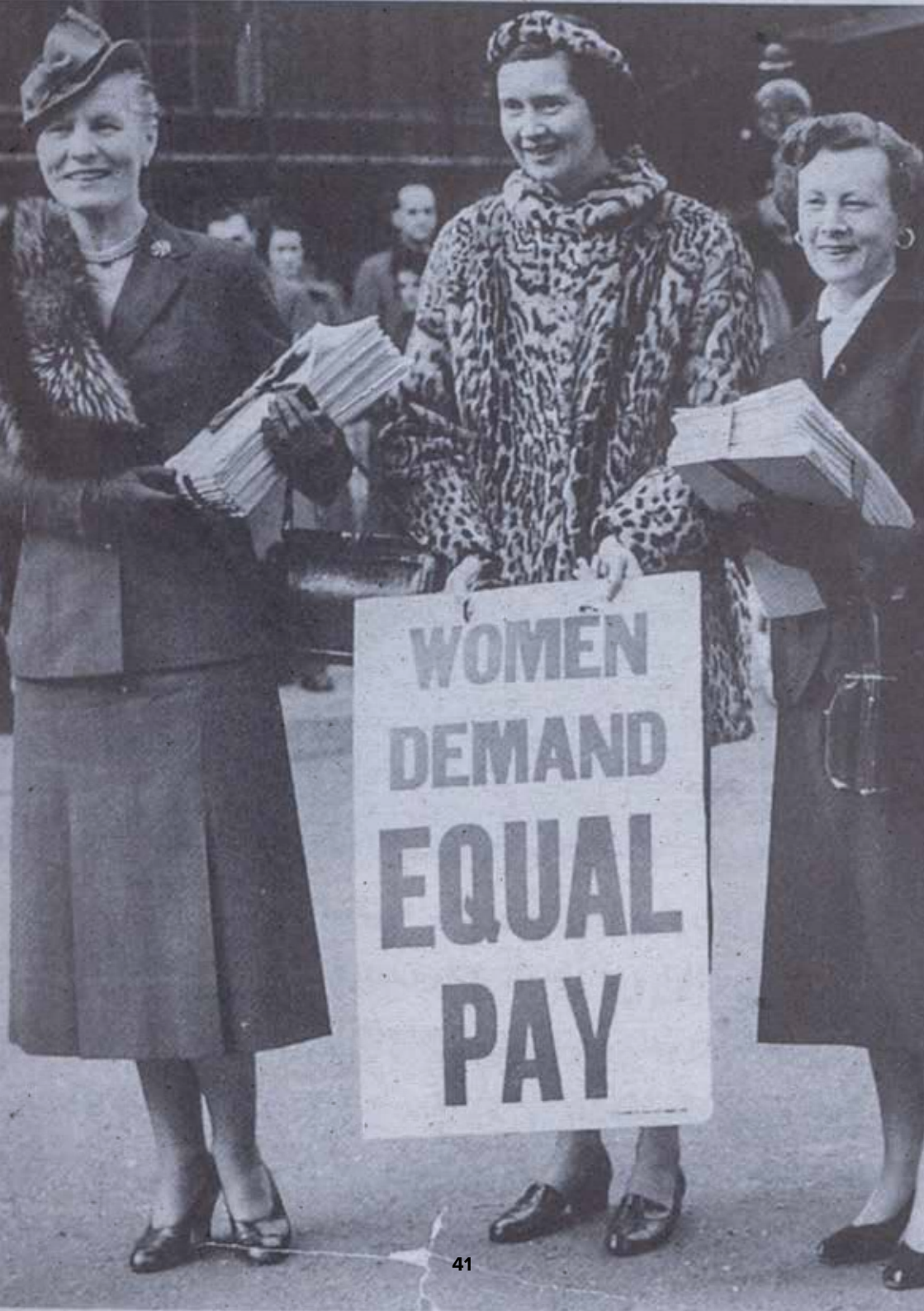
Dilys Cossey

London: Birth Control Campaign, 1982

"Can this conflict be resolved? What is needed is a practical solution so that women legally entitled to abortion may get sympathetic, speedy treatment from willing professionals"

A leading campaigner for abortion, birth control and reproductive rights, Dilys Cossey was a key member of the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA), who led the calls for the 1967 Abortion Act. Cossey was the General Secretary of the Birth Control Campaign where she campaigned for free contraception on the NHS.





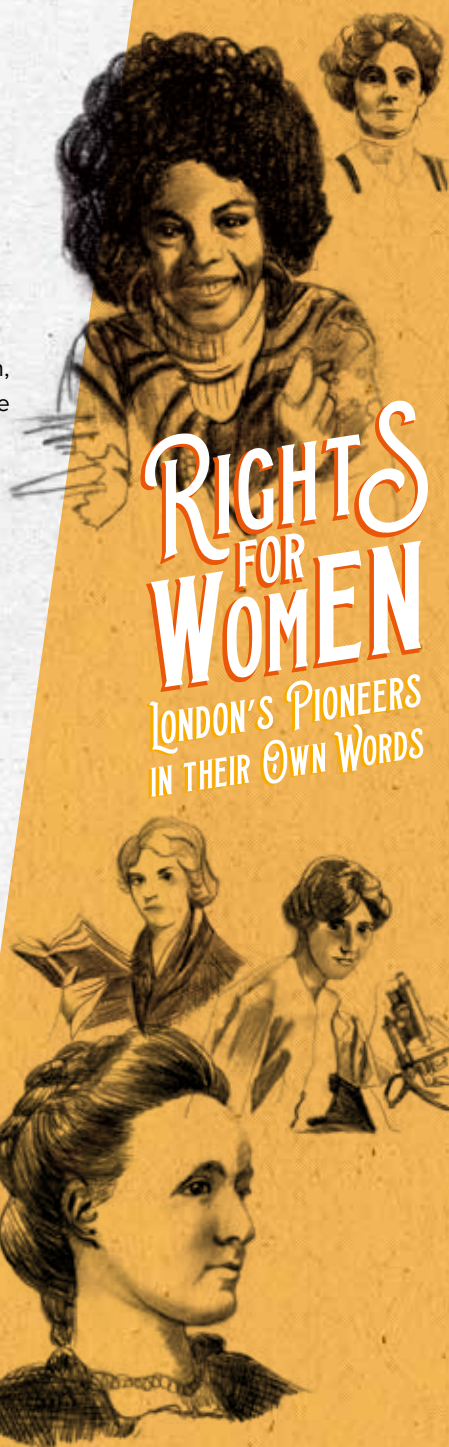
Continuing Her Story

This part of the exhibition curates the thoughts and works that have influenced contemporary leading women, who have worked with us on this exhibition, to continue a platform for women's voices today. We will continue to add to this throughout the season.

- The book that has inspired me is...
- The woman I most admire from history is...
- The woman I most admire today is...
- The women's issue I am most concerned about today is...
- I hope the next generation of women will be able to/be free of...

Join us in leading this legacy forward for the next generation of women by adding your selections to 'Continuing Her Story', our digital platform, taking a snapshot of contemporary women today and their thoughts on past, present and future.

Go to: <http://rfw18.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk>
Share on social media using #RfW18
#RememberHer



What's On

Event highlights

July - December 2018

GUIDED WALKS OF LONDON PIONEERS (throughout the season) - led by Camden Tour Guides Association'.

SUMMER (JULY-AUGUST)

ZINE WORKSHOP with Laydeez Do Comics The UK's first women-led monthly graphic novel forum, lead a workshop on the themes of the exhibition.

AUTUMN (SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER)

WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT - a debate on the themes explored in the exhibition, co-hosted with 50:50 Parliament'.

DEEDS NOT WORDS - talk & book signing with author Helen Pankhurst.

FABER & FABER BOOK LAUNCH: WHAT WOULD BOUDICCA DO? Life Lessons From History's Most Remarkable Women.

WINTER (NOVEMBER-DECEMBER)

SONGS OF SUFFRAGE with the Berkeley Ensemble performing suffrage songs to music.

FINALE (two-day event) of talks, seminars and stalls from leading organisations in London supporting women's rights.

For full event details and bookings, go to RfW18.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk

WOMEN ON FILM

Senate House Library's monthly film club. Held on the last Thursday of every month in the stunning Periodicals Room.



JULY **Belle**, 2014 (99 mins) | Director: Ama Assante

AUGUST **Orlando**, 1992 (93 mins) | Director: Sally Potter

SEPTEMBER **Maisie's Marriage [or Married Love]**, 1923 (96 mins) | Director: Alexander Butler (written by Marie Stopes who was consultant on the film)

OCTOBER **Girl Rising**, 2012 (103 mins) | Director: Richard E. Robbins

NOVEMBER **Made in Dagenham**, 2010 (108 mins) | Director: Nigel Cole

Useful information

Opening hours Monday-Saturday
Sunday: Closed

Term time hours:
Monday - Thursday:
09:45 - 20:45
Friday: 09:00 - 17:45
Saturday: 09:45 - 17:15

Out of term time:
Monday – Friday:
09:00 - 17:45
Saturday: 09:45 - 17:15

How to find us We are on the 4th floor of Senate House in Bloomsbury, Central London – a short walk from London Underground, and national railway stations.

Senate House Library
University of London
Malet Street
London WC1E 7HU



Public Transport

Closest bus stops

Tottenham Court Road or Russell Square (Numbers 7, 24, 29, 68, X68, 73, 91, 134, 168 and 188).

Closest London Underground stations

Russell Square
Goodge Street
Tottenham Court Road
Euston Square

Closest Railway stations

Euston
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International





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