Abstracts for the Aftermath of Suffrage Conference

An International Conference, Friday 24th and Saturday 25th June, 2011.
Humanities Research Institute, University of Sheffield

In alphabetical order

John Ault (University of Exeter), “Beatrice Rathbone – the reluctant feminist?”

Aged 30, American-born Beatrice Rathbone became the Member of Parliament for Bodmin, elected unopposed following her husband’s death as a consequence of the Battle of Britain. The nephew of Independent MP, Eleanor Rathbone, John had been elected in 1935, defeating the patriarch of the Foot dynasty, Isaac Foot.

Beatrice, the wife of the local Conservative MP, was chosen to succeed him, in 1941, despite the nationally recognised Isaac Foot, being willing to serve during the war. Beatrice stood down at the subsequent election but became the first MP to give birth whilst a Member of Parliament, and the second female MP from Cornwall. Whilst an MP, she was an advocate for children’s nurseries, a minimum wage for women workers and fair wages for W.A.A.F. members. She also campaigned for better women’s representation, on the welfare of expectant women prisoners, the fostering of children, improved public health and debated perambulator production. She was also a strong advocate on local issues affecting her constituency. She retired from Parliament in 1945, having married Paul Wright, a career diplomat.

The paper will discuss the way in which Beatrice Rathbone was propelled into national politics and the way she played an increasing role in advocating women’s and family issues. Her election was in the face of local pressure for an established politician, Isaac Foot, who was presumed to be more suitable for the role, with greater experience, as a previous Minister of Mines, in a time of war.

Biographical details:
John Ault is a PhD student at the Institute of Cornish Studies at Exeter University. His research is into the effects party political campaign techniques, personalities and party strategy on politics since the First World War through to the present day. Having worked in politics in elections across the UK and the United States he is particularly interested in the effect personality politics has on political campaigns, looking at figures like Isaac Foot and David Penhaligon in the context of Cornwall.

Mitzi Auchterlonie (University of Exeter), “Continuity rather than change: Conservative women in the post-suffrage era, 1918-1930” [has withdrawn]

Although there were Conservative women who supported women’s suffrage and set up their own suffrage organization, who presided over the late nineteenth-century development of women and girls’ education and who sat on local government bodies such as Poor Law Unions and School Boards, they still do not figure prominently in the suffrage and other related literature. In the years after 1918 they carried on doing the work that they had always undertaken, supporting Conservative men through their work in local Conservative Women’s Associations and the Primrose League and continuing their work in local government and voluntary health and welfare provision.

Using their journal ‘Home and Politics’ and other official and personal archive material, this paper will examine the political and social work of Conservative women
activists and argue that it demonstrates a continuation and development of activities undertaken prior to 1918, rather that a new kind of involvement in public affairs that might have been expected after women had been enfranchised.

**Biographical details:**

I did my first degree with Exeter University and after a period away from academic life I returned to Exeter to gain an M.A. in Women's Studies in 1993. The role and status of women throughout history became my chief interest, focusing particularly on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and for my doctoral dissertation I examined Conservative Party women and their involvement in the women's suffrage campaign between 1880 and 1918. This work has now been published as ‘Conservative Suffragists: The Women’s Vote and the Tory Party’. In collaboration with two other academics I have co-written an encyclopaedia of women's suffrage and I am currently involved in a joint project to examine the progress of women activists in nineteenth and twentieth-century Devon. I teach online courses in Victorian and local history at Exeter University.


With the arrival of the first female parliamentary electors and candidates in 1918, the Scottish Women’s Liberal Federation and the Scottish Liberal Association decided to merge to form the Scottish Liberal Federation, a new unisex Liberal Party organisation in Scotland. Scottish Liberal women were now promised “equal rights in every way” and it was decided that there should be equal representation of the sexes on the SLF’s Executive and General Council. At the same time, the Scottish Unionist Association merged with the Scottish Women’s Unionist Association. Unlike the Liberals, the Unionists did not opt for equal representation of the sexes on their governing bodies. Furthermore, they fairly quickly decided that it was desirable to have women’s sub-committees” something that the Liberals had (initially) rejected.

By the 1930s Scotland had elected three Unionist women to parliament and the Unionists had a large and active female membership whose contribution to the Unionist Party’s work in Scotland was recognised and praised by its leadership. The Liberals, on the other hand, would not elect a female MP in Scotland until 1987. In the decades after 1918 the Liberals had several problems relating to the organisation of their female membership and Liberal women failed to make as great an impact in their party as the Unionist women did in theirs. This paper will examine the organisation, roles and impact of female members in the Liberal and Unionist Parties in Scotland and seek to explain them. In doing this, the paper will also consider whether the parties’ organisation of women after 1918 goes some way to explaining why in the forty years after 1918 the Unionist Party enjoyed unprecedented electoral success in Scotland while the once mighty Liberal Party endured a catastrophic electoral collapse.

**Biographical details:**

Dr Kenneth Baxter is a part-time Archives Assistant and History tutor at the University of Dundee. In 2008 he was awarded a Ph.D. by the University of Dundee for a thesis entitled ""Estimable and Gifted”: Women in Party Politics in Scotland c.1918-1955’. He has presented papers based on his research on a number of occasions including at events organised by the Women's History Network, the Social History Society and Women's History Scotland. He has also done some teaching for the School of History at the University of St. Andrews. His recent publications include ‘Florence Gertrude Horsbrugh. The Conservative Party’s forgotten first lady’,
Laura Beers (American University, Washington, DC), "Feminism versus Party?: female solidarity and party politics in the aftermath of suffrage"

This paper considers the challenges to cross-party feminist organization in British political culture after 1918, through a case study of the short-lived Women for Westminster society. The society was founded in 1942 and hobbled on until 1949 when it was subsumed into the Women’s Citizenship Association, an organization that explicitly abjured involvement in party politics. Women for Westminster’s goal was to train women for political life, and to assist female candidates at general elections. It foundered on the discomfort of local members with the national leadership’s apparent willingness to put sex before party in supporting women across the political spectrum.

This paper sheds light on recent debates over whether the interwar period saw a shift towards a more cooperative, non-partisan form of political culture, and what role feminist organizations played in that shift. The surge of associational activity between the wars did not represent an abjuration of party politics. Participation in such organizations lasted only as long as partisan identities were not contested, and members “agreed to disagree” at election time. Investigating the limits of cross-party cooperation can broaden our understanding of why Britain’s parliamentary system remained so firmly entrenched at a time when countries throughout Europe saw their own multi-party systems come under threat and collapse. While civic associations (and especially feminist organizations) supported goals that often transcended party boundaries, they were also wedded to a political system characterized by partisanship.

Biographical details:
Beers's research focuses on twentieth century British politics and society. Her first book, Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party was published by Harvard University Press. She is the co-editor, with Geraint Thomas of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, of a forthcoming volume of essays on interwar Britain, provisionally titled Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars. She has published on the role of public opinion in politics, and is working on a study of attitudes towards democracy in British politics. She is currently researching a book-length study of the impact of the enfranchisement of women on the conduct and content of party politics in twentieth century Britain, and is planning a biography of the British Labour politician and early female MP, Ellen Wilkinson.


The object of this paper will be to present and discuss Arabella Kenealy’s views women and suffrage. The final chapter of Feminism and Sex-Extinction (1920) by Arabella Kenealy, entitled “The Impending Subjection of Man”, in echo to John Stuart Mills Subjection of Women, expounds the famous gynaecologist and novelist’s view on female sufrage. Contrary to the famous MP who had defended women’s right to vote, Arabella Kenealy believes that “granting” women the vote was a terrible mistake, she declares:
“In the long and painful history of man’s more or less total failure to value and to honour woman for her greatest, her most vital and self-sacrificing part in human affairs, none has approached in obliquity his recent deplorable blunder of awarding her the suffrage and the right to sit in Parliament, as recognition of her war services”[1]

Arabella Kenealy whose neodarwinian and eugenic beliefs have led her to develop a theory of the differences of the sexes which entails a very strict division of their respective roles, fears that feminism might lead to masculinism in women which in turn might cause a feminisation of men and subsequently a disappearance of each sex specificity which is vital to the survival of the human race. She believes that the path to evolution and progress lies in greater differences between men and women. In her opinion, feminism aims at the contrary since its goal is the elimination of sex-differences and the abolition of sex-distinctions in every department of life and activity.”

For Arabella Kenealy, women should not sit in Parliament in its existing form; there should be two Houses, one of Men and one of Women, each dealing with the natural responsibilities bearing on their sex.


Adrian Bingham (University of Sheffield), “Enfranchisement, Feminism and the Modern Woman: Debates in the British Press, 1918-1939”

This paper will explore three interconnected questions that preoccupied the British national press in the aftermath of suffrage. First, how would the enfranchisement of women affect the style and substance of British political life? Second, how relevant was feminism now that the vote had been achieved? Third, how were women adapting to the new freedoms and opportunities brought by the war, social change and legal reform? This paper will seek to demonstrate that the debates on these questions overlapped and interacted in significant ways. In particular, the extensive press publicity given to the achievements of modern women led many commentators to exaggerate the immediate political impact of the female voter and to discount the need for further feminist campaigning. Predictions that political and social equality were near encouraged a presentation of feminism as 'out-dated' and old-fashioned, and this seems to have done much to damage the movement's standing among younger women.

**Biographical details:**
Dr Adrian Bingham is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Sheffield. He is the author of Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain (OUP, 2004), and Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-78 (OUP, 2009).

Myriam Boussahba-Bravard (University of Paris—Diderot), “Claiming and acting: from pre-war united suffragist emancipation to post-war female political diversity”

Before WW1, in the heydays of suffragism, women united in a one-issue campaign beyond classes, political affiliations and diversity of opinion. After WW1, they
disbanded into political diversity and individually-based affiliations. What remained constant was their claims and their activism. However, the structuring of the prewar suffragist movement melted into political alignment with the pre-war male political scene which survived WW1 almost intact.

Esther Breitenbach (University of Edinburgh), “Scottish women as active citizens: 1918-1939”

This paper will provide an overview of the ways in which women in Scotland exercised their newly acquired citizenship rights after 1918 up to the outbreak of war in 1939, both within the sphere of formal politics and within civil society organisations. Although the number of women elected as political representatives was relatively low in this period, there is evidence of an active commitment to women’s representation across a range of organisations, such as Women Citizens’ Associations, the Co-operative Women’s Guild and the Scottish Women’s Rural Institute. The idea of citizenship was important to many women’s organisations, as was the notion that they should exercise civic responsibility, from moral regulation to social welfare. The paper will outline the organisational networks which existed in this period, and identify the key policy issues with which women were concerned. The paper will argue that the relationship between women’s organisations and political parties appears to have been important in determining their scope for action, and that relationships between women’s organisations were also important to the capacity for mobilisation around particular issues. However, divisions between organisations have also been apparent, and this theme will also be explored.

The paper will draw on recently published work included in the collection Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century, and will also draw on ongoing research.

Biographical details:
Dr Esther Breitenbach is a Research Fellow in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. She is currently the holder of an ESRC Research Award on ‘Empire and Civil Society in 20th Century Scotland’. She has written widely on women in Scotland, including on women’s history in 19th and 20th century Scotland and on women in contemporary Scottish politics. She is co-editor with Pat Thane of Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century (Continuum, 2010). Email: Esther.Breitenbach@ed.ac.uk

Christopher Burgess (University of Nottingham), “Appealing to women: The political party poster in the age of female enfranchisement”

Lisa Tickner’s work revealed much about how the suffragette movement used posters to appeal to unenfranchised women. We know much less, however, about how political parties used the same medium to speak those women once they had the vote. The franchise extension of 1918 and 1929 forced political parties to construct new ‘languages’ to speak to female voters. This paper examines the ‘visual language’ of inter-war party election posters.

New-political historians have embraced the study of political language; the work of Jon Lawrence, David Jarvis, and Laura Beers has revealed much about the way parties communicated in the inter-war period. Parties’ use of posters as a form of political communication between 1918 and 1929, however, remains largely unconsidered. This paper addresses this research gap, specifically exploring how
parties spoke to the new female electorate. For the historian posters provide an interesting source of evidence, as they often depict the person to whom they were trying to appeal. Did the illustrations of women in these posters reflect the party’s opinion of the new female voter or depict her as they wanted her to be? As with research into any form of communication, the study of posters reveals as much about the communicator as it does about the communication itself.

**Biographical details:**
Christopher Burgess is a PhD student at the University of Nottingham. His research focuses on how Britain’s four main political parties used posters during the 20th century. Despite being one of the primary methods of communication between party and voter, research into the British political poster has been largely overlooked. The PhD examines what content parties used on their posters, how and why they chose this content and what impact posters had on the British electorate. The PhD is a collaborative partnership with the People’s History Museum.

**Krista Cowman (University of Lincoln), “Writing a gendered political life: women MP's autobiographies”**

That political autobiography is largely a male preserve is usually unquestioned. Little work exists to date on how an early generation of women MPs chose to construct their lives in print. In this paper, I will consider the 15 autobiographies written by women MPs elected between 1919 (and 1964 (which saw the largest number - 29 - of women returned to Parliament prior to the selection reforms of the 1990s). Subjects range from less familiar figures such as Jean Mann to more prominent political leaders including Margaret Thatcher. The paper will consider the extent to which women who chose to write their political autobiographies presented themselves as representatives of their sex, or whether they were more eager to appear as party loyalists. Covering five decades, the paper will also map women MP's reactions to key changes in their working conditions in Parliament ranging from their gaining washing facilities to the introduction of separate party-based women's quarters. Finally it will consider whether political autobiographies suggest that 'women's interests' remained identifiable throughout the period, or whether these too shifted as the novelty of women in Parliament diminished'

**Ruth Davidson (Royal Holloway, University of London), “‘Pioneer, Fighting, Spirit’: Barbara Duncan Harris, 1881-1959”**

Barbara Duncan Harris, NUWSS Organising Secretary for the Hampshire, East Sussex and Surrey County Federation, was one of many individuals who galvanised local networks of women into successful campaigning. Furthermore this role instigated her remarkable life of public activism. As was noted ‘her work for women’s suffrage and children’s welfare led her … to a realisation that violence and injustice are made infinitely more terrible by wars … [and] compelled her to work tirelessly and unremittingly for disarmament and the emancipation of women.¹ During the interwar years her role within the Women’s International League saw her become the chair of the British Section. Yet she also remained a significant figure in local civil society. She was the inspiration behind the development of the Infant Welfare Movement in Croydon, the first Labour women councillor in the County Borough, JP, Free Church

¹ LSE, WIL Archives, AN8, A/7/5/8, Memorial Service.
Council Chair, prominent Quaker and feminist; hers was a life of activism and commitment.

Yet whilst this is a portrayal of one woman’s personal journey in many ways her trajectory is emblematic of the fortunes of many of those who were integral to the pre-war campaign. Contextualising the careers of suffragists within the broader network of their local political activism illuminates that citizenship represented more than the attainment of vote alone. The ambition to realise broader goals of gendered social justice, civil rights, internationalism and peace continued to animate women such as Barbara Duncan Harris throughout the interwar years. An exploration of her life, therefore, will exemplify the richness and consistency of the political activism of suffrage women beyond the achievement of the franchise.

**Biographical details:**
Having achieved a BA (Hons.) in History from the University of Manchester in 1987 I spent 13 years within business before completing an MA with the Open University in 2004. I concluded my PhD at Royal Holloway in October 2010.

My thesis considered a network of female campaigners within the civil society of Croydon and East Surrey, 1914-39 and has argued for continuities in the motivations that prompted women to become involved in public activism. I demonstrate that it is important to comprehend the particular if we are to locate and contextualise the nature of women’s political work. My on-going research seeks to extend this exploration of the political spaces women create within their neighbourhoods and emphasize that these were a critical arena through which they were able to assert and extend their rights and duties as citizens.

**Julie Gottlieb (University of Sheffield), “Don’t believe in foreigners’ (Woman M-O interviewee in 1938): Appeasement and the Women’s Franchise Factor”**

Women represented a new and often menacing franchise factor in inter-war politics, reflecting deep-seated anxieties about the influence this new electorate would and could have on domestic policy, the proper conduct of political procedure and age old ritual, the success or failure of socialism, the perseverance of conservatism, and the framing of the nation’s foreign policy. This paper is concerned with the power women exercised and were seen to exercise in the series of by-elections that followed the Munich Agreement in the autumn and winter of 1938. By mid-October eight new by-elections were due to be contested, all of which were understood to provide an instructive reflection of public opinion on the Government’s foreign policy. These were Oxford City, Dartford, Walsall, Doncaster, Bridgwater, West Lewisham, and the Fylde Division of Lancashire, and Kinross. The last of these, the Duchess of Atholl’s seat in rural Scotland, was especially instructive as we seek to gender appeasement, the “Red Duchess” having brought this by-election upon herself by rejecting the Tory whip and resigning her seat in opposition to the Government’s foreign policy. Of these eight by-elections, six were Conservative holds, although in all cases there was a swing against the Conservatives. The focus on women voters as a bloc was due, of course, to the addition of 4,750,000 women voters to the electorate with the Equal Franchise Act (July, 1928). Indeed, the byelections of 1938 and 1939, especially the immediate post-Munich by-elections, an unusually high number being imminent, were each seen as general elections in miniature, and gender played a more significant part in these than has previously been acknowledged. There were many women among the by-election candidates - and notably all these fought on anti-appeasement platforms, which is more than a little ironic; there was much concern and debate about the impact the female electorate would have on the results – and this could be
identified at all points of the political spectrum; and the whole appeasement debate and support for Chamberlain had already been gendered by the political parties and the press. It was clearly felt that women voted as a bloc, that they were more susceptible to political manipulation and electioneering trickery due to their political immaturity, and that they were much more easily swayed by emotion and spiritual appeals than could be their male counterparts. Indeed, the study of the representations of women’s engagement in the political process in these post-Munich by-elections speaks for more than the sum of its parts.

Susan R. Grayzel (University of Mississippi), “Defending Domestic Spaces and Bodies: Gender, Citizenship, and Civil Defence in the Aftermath of War and Suffrage”

In June 1917, even difference-based British feminists could justly celebrate their new-found stature when the government sponsored the first ever National Baby Week. However, Baby Week coincided with another innovation—a devastating daylight aerial attack in the heart of London. In the aftermath of these occurrences, suffragist Ida O’Malley reflected in the pages of The Common Cause that “the blue sky, and sunshine, and babies, and menace of swift death, was altogether very characteristic of the strange times in which we live, and, very unlike anything we could have imagined before nineteen hundred and fourteen.” Most significantly for O’Malley, “things which used to be separate in fact, or in our minds, have been violently thrown together, and, as it were, mixed up. In former days it used to be possible to arrange things in categories. One could still, if one wished, think of the state as separate from the home, of men as separate from women.” Air war waged against civilians—against “babies”—made this no longer possible.

By 1928 when women finally received the vote on the same terms as British men, this mixing of state and home could be found most vividly in the creation of state apparatus to protect the home and the lives therein from an anticipated next war, one that would involve aerial attacks (and possibly chemical ones) against men, women, and children at home. How were women to be marshaled into their new roles as citizens in a wartime state where gender was no longer any sort of guarantee of safety?

Drawing upon public and private discussions, this paper explores evolving interwar debates about gender and citizenship in light of both government efforts to develop procedures and quite literally devices (the air raid shelter, the gas mask) to defend domestic spaces and bodies, and feminist efforts to challenge the necessity and appropriateness of state expansion into these realms.

Biographical details:
Susan R. Grayzel received her A.B. Magna cum laude with Highest Honors in History and Literature from Harvard University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Late Modern European History from the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of Women’s Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), which won the British Council Prize from the North American Conference on British Studies in 2000, and Women and the First World War (Longman, 2002), a global history.

She has two forthcoming books: At Home and Under Fire: Domesticating the Air Raid in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz (Cambridge) and The First World War: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford St. Martins) for the Bedford Series in History and Culture. In addition, she is the co-editor with Philippa Levine of Gender, Labour,
Karen Hunt (Keele University) and June Hannam (University of the West of England), “Towards an archaeology of interwar women’s politics: the local and the everyday”

Winning the principle that sex no longer disqualified women from formal political citizenship was bound to change the nature and practice of politics – but not necessarily as some had dreamed and others had feared. Mapping the effect of enfranchisement on how women understood and ‘did’ politics in the period after partial women’s suffrage was achieved is our focus here. This paper raises questions about the reframing of interwar women’s politics by turning from the more familiar national, organizational or even biographical focus to the locality – the space in which everyday politics was experienced. By exploring the interrelationship between the changing possibilities of women’s politics (stretching across formal and informal, mixed-sex and single-sex, political organizations and activities) and situating this not only within the swift moving politics of the 1920s but also local political cultures and histories of women’s neighbourhood activism, we can begin to achieve a more nuanced picture of the aftermath of suffrage. To the rich mix of what we already know about separate elements of interwar women’s politics, we want to find a way to add the local and the everyday. We propose a new archaeology of women’s politics which poses challenges for how we explain what happened after the vote was won but also of how we conceive of politics more generally.


In July 1913 Evelyn Sharp, well-known children’s writer, journalist and erstwhile secretary of Kensington WSPU, went to Holloway Gaol for the second time. A few days earlier, Margaret Mackworth (later Lady Rhondda) best known of the Welsh suffragettes and secretary of the Newport, Monmouthshire WSPU, had been sent to Usk Gaol. Undeterred, both women remained committed suffragettes.

Fast forward a decade and Evelyn Sharp had become a committed international humanitarian and pacifist active in Quaker relief work and journalism in Europe. Lady Rhondda was now a very wealthy and influential businesswoman. In 1923 she held more directorships than any woman in the UK, chaired eleven companies and was deputy chair of three others. At the same time she was developing her new venture: Time and Tide. Run by women, this review was arguably the most successful of the inter-war weeklies. She had also set up the influential Six Point Group and was one of the guiding spirits of equal rights feminism.

Moving on another ten years, in 1933 both published their autobiographies. Evelyn Sharp married for the first time. The divorced Margaret Rhondda decided to set up home with Theodora Bosanquet with whom she would live for the rest of her life. But how important was feminism now to these journalists? What were their priorities? And how were international politics affecting their perspectives?
Drawing on my recent biography of Evelyn Sharp and my current research into the life of Lady Rhondda, this paper will examine and compare the shifts in these women’s lives and consider how central and instrumental their suffrage experiences had been to their subsequent actions and beliefs.

Jon Lawrence (University of Cambridge), “Class and gender in popular politics between the wars”

This paper will explore continuities and discontinuities in British public politics across the first three decades of the twentieth century. It will explore how, between the wars, both the style and content of public politics adapted to reflect the new mass electorate, though despite Labour’s electoral breakthrough the pace of change was decidedly gradual. Politicians, new and old, recognised the need to modify the character of electioneering to reflect both the influx of women electors and the greatly diminished claims of non-voters to ‘have their say’. But since the restrained gentlemanly ideal of platform masculinity had always defined itself against the crowd, the shift to a mass electorate demanded less a change of political style than a subtle recalibration of politicians’ expectations about the character and role of the crowd. Now that all men (and most women) were citizens there was less need to tolerate the voluble and sometimes boorish behaviour of the excluded during an election. Female enfranchisement was not essential to this shift in sensibilities, but it did reinforce the trend towards a more restrained model of citizenship, which came to mirror the restrained codes governing political leadership. Other, rather darker, factors were also at work, including a widespread fear of the brutalizing effects of war, and a growing sense that class hatred might underpin the boisterous excesses of the irreverent crowd, but even so Britain was inching towards a more democratic understanding of the relationship between politician and public. This was the fundamental meaning of the growing parity of expectation about conduct in public politics. The universalisation of the ideal of ‘restraint’ should be read, not as a classic case of ‘social control’, but rather as a grudging recognition of the need, at a minimum, to appear to believe in the fundamental equality of all citizens. This change was reflected in subtle changes to the dress code of male politicians, and increasingly homely models of political leadership, but these were modest adjustments to what remained the overwhelmingly patrician model of political leadership, as embodied as much by Ramsay MacDonald or Clement Attlee, as Stanley Baldwin.

Anne Logan (University of Kent), “Public Servant, Public Intellectual: the Post-suffrage Career of S Margery Fry”

In paving the way for further legislation such as the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, the granting of partial women’s suffrage in 1918 resulted directly in the entry of women into a range of new roles in public life, including those of MP and magistrate. One of the first women to be appointed to the magistracy was S. Margery Fry (1874-1958). A friend of Eleanor Rathbone since their student days, Fry had strong suffrage sympathies and came close to standing for parliament in the 1918 election. Although she was never to achieve her youthful ambitions to become a lawyer or an MP (she was barred from both roles until she was in her forties), Fry nevertheless had a distinguished career of public service, combining pressure group activities with membership of many government committees, ranging from the University Grants Committee to the Colonial Office’s advisory group on penal treatment. In later life she became a broadcasting ‘celebrity’, appearing on the radio and on early, televised discussion programmes.
Fry’s public activities were so extensive that a short paper cannot do justice to them all. Therefore this paper will concentrate on some of the wider questions raised by a study of Fry’s career, in particular the role that the granting of women’s suffrage played in framing a career in public service and as a public intellectual. Was 1918 a life-changing, epochal moment for politically motivated women such as Fry, or merely a stage on a very long journey?

**Biographical Details:**
Anne Logan is a lecturer in Social History at the University of Kent and the author of Feminism and Criminal Justice: a Historical Perspective (Palgrave, 2008). She has also published several articles on the introduction of women magistrates. Recent publications include ‘Women and the Provision of Criminal Justice Policy Advice: Lessons from England and Wales 1944-64’, British Journal of Criminology (2010). She is currently researching a biographical study of the founder of the Howard League for Penal Reform, S. Margery Fry (1874-1958).

Laura-Mari Manninen, (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), “The Women’s Suffrage Question in British Parliamentary Debates on ‘Representation of the People’s Act 1918’ ”

The long struggle for female franchise has become one of the best known aspects of the story of British parliamentary reform. However, previous research has mainly concentrated on reviewing the subject from the viewpoint of the suffragettes and suffragists. The parliamentarian point of view has been left at the background, although the role of British Parliament in the women’s suffrage question was very essential.

Both the chambers, the Commons and the Lords debated on the women’s suffrage a number of times in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. In this paper, I will highlight important debates relating to the Clause 4 on the Representation of the People’s Act 1918 which gave women who owned property over the age of 30 the right to vote. Through these debates, I will look for answers to questions, such as what kind of arguments the Members of Parliament put forward both for and against the women’s suffrage and what made the women eligible to receive the right to participate in parliamentarian decision-making process?

In this paper, I am going to argue that the Members of Parliament in both chambers used partly the same arguments both for and against the women’s suffrage in these debates than in earlier ones relating to women’s suffrage. New arguments such as women’s effort in the First World War and women’s education were highlighted, but also arguments such as married women’s status and women’s ability to use political power were brought out. This paper proposes that the parliamentarian aspect of the women’s suffrage question has played a significant role in the female emancipation, and conceptual history as a methodological approach will give a new perspective on research of women’s suffrage question in Britain.

**Biographical Details:**
My name is Laura-Mari Manninen, and I am a PhD student in the Department of History and Ethnology in the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. I am working in the Academy of Finland research project called “Parliamentary Means of Conflict Resolution in 20th-century Britain” led by Professor Pasi Ihalainen. In my dissertation, I will study women’s suffrage question in Edwardian Britain. The focus will be on the British Parliament as well as on the Women’s Social and Political Union.
and its members. The research will focus on how key concepts such as ‘liberty’, ‘freedom’, ‘justice’, ‘vote’, ‘citizen’ and ‘citizenship’ were used in the primary sources, and the study of argumentation will be also included in the research.

Joseph Maslen (Sheffield Hallam University), “Girlhood Activism in the 1920s and 1930s in the Recollections of Margot Kettle”

The recollections of Margot Kettle née Gale (1916-95) show that, in the changing political context of the 1920s and 1930s, with the ever-present and growing threat of a second Great War, the attentions of some girls and young women could turn from the suffrage to issues of human sustainability in which women and girls could lead men. In the 1920s and 1930s, the concerns of girls such as Kettle focused not on the equality of political freedom but on the equanimity of political debate. In Kettle’s particular case, this political moment related to the pre-suffrage background of her family history—her mother having followed and at one time, at home, hosted the Theosophical leader Annie Besant—and to her future as a wartime leader of the National Union of Students. In these personal histories, the image of women’s strength eschewed the “stern struggles” of the suffrage campaigners for the conception of women as powerful mediators of conflict.

Helen McCarthy (Queen Mary, University of London), ‘Shut Against the Woman and Workman Alike’: Democratizing Foreign Policy between the Wars

What was the impact of universal suffrage upon the discourse and practice of international relations in Britain between the wars? To what extent did the widening of the franchise lead to a ‘democratisation’ of foreign policy, long considered one of the most secretive and aristocratic arms of the state? How far and in what ways were policy debates about foreign affairs reconfigured by the creation of a mass electorate, heavily working-class in character and swelled by millions of new female voters? In addressing these questions, this paper will argue that the Fourth Reform Act of 1918 had important implications for the place occupied by foreign policy within Britain’s political culture.

Coinciding with the end of a war which had seen millions slaughtered and which many blamed on the secret machinations of unaccountable elites, the Fourth Reform Act strengthened the belief, widely-held amongst progressives, that the British public would not tolerate any government which conducted its foreign policy behind closed doors. Once confined to radical circles, calls for greater accountability and public consultation in this area of policy moved into mainstream political discourse, championed by such popular bodies as the League of Nations Union and expressed perhaps most powerfully in the famous ‘Peace Ballot’ of 1934-5. Anxious to demonstrate the public-spiritedness of the new female electorate, women’s organisations embraced this discourse of democratisation with particular enthusiasm. Dedicated peace bodies such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom worked alongside the Women’s Institutes, the National Council of Women, the women’s sections of the political parties and church-based associations to educate and mobilise their members on international affairs. For these organisations, ‘good’ citizenship meant taking an active interest not only in local and national politics, but in the problems facing the world at large.

As a result, foreign policy increasingly entered public debate after 1918, engaging and mobilising a much larger proportion of the British population than even before. The extent to which policy decision-making was democratised is, however, rather
more doubtful. Governments paid lip-service to the publicity regime of the League of Nations and arguably became more skilled at presenting their foreign policy objectives to a mass audience. Yet policy continued to be set by a small inner-circle of male ministers and officials most of whom emanated from upper or upper-middleclass backgrounds. As one (female) observer noted gloomily in late 1938: ‘The fortress of diplomacy is male and aristocratic. It is shut against the woman and workman alike.’

**Biographical Details:**
Helen McCarthy studied for her first degree in History at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, after which she spent a year at Harvard University as a Kennedy Scholar. She worked for the think-tank Demos between 2002 and 2004 before moving to the Institute of Historical Research (University of London) to undertake doctoral study on popular attitudes towards the League of Nations in interwar Britain. She held a Junior Research Fellowship at St John’s College, Cambridge, for the academic year 2008-9, before joining Queen Mary in September 2009 as a Lecturer in Modern British History. She has published on various aspects of interwar political culture and has recently completed a book manuscript on the popular League of Nations movement in Britain, c.1918-1945. She is currently developing a new project on women in diplomacy from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Helen serves on the editorial board of History and Policy and coconvenes the British History 1815-1945 seminar at the IHR.

**Susan McPherson (University of Essex), “Norah Elam: Militant Suffragette to Fascist Propagandist**

Norah Dacre Fox was General Secretary of the WSPU from 1913. She was close to Grace Roe, a fellow Irish woman with whom she produced the weekly newspaper The Suffragette. Norah possessed great oratory skills and a talent for propaganda. Her ‘inciting’ speeches led to her arrest and imprisonment where she endured three periods of hunger strike and force feeding. Norah stood as an Independent candidate in 1918 in Richmond, but lost the seat. This was the beginning of disillusionment with democracy for Norah, who later in life recorded her frustration that the only woman who did win a seat was Constance Markievicz, a Sinn Féin candidate committed to destruction of the English Parliament. Norah turned her attention to anti-vivisection and animal welfare which were movements associated with suffrage movements since the late 1800s. In 1934, she and her partner, Dudley Elam, joined the British Union of Fascists (BUF). Mosley recognised her talent for propaganda and put her forward as a prospective election candidate. Norah worked as Sussex Women’s Organiser alongside William Joyce, the Area Administrative Officer. Around 1937 Norah moved back to London to be more involved in Mosley’s inner circle. Norah’s career in the BUF eventually led to her arrest under Defence Regulation 18b in May 1940 along with Oswald Mosley. After the war Norah associated with Holocaust denier Arnold Leese. This paper attempts to understand Norah’s motivations and the actions which drove her from seeking votes for women in the early 1900s to becoming a fascist propagandist.

**Biographical Details:**
I completed a BSc in social psychology at LSE in 1998, an MSc in health psychology at UCL in 2001 and a PhD in medical sociology at KCL in 2007. I have worked in health service research since 1998 and am currently a Lecturer in the School of Health and Human Sciences at the University of Essex. My interest in Norah Elam initially developed from family history research. I have recently begun developing research interests in the history of medicine, specifically around vaccination debates
in the 20th century which brings together my academic background with a growing interest in history.

Laura E. Nym Mayhall (The Catholic University of America), “‘It’s your face that is carrying you through!’: Nancy Astor and the Politics of Anglo-American Celebrity, 1919-1929”

While Nancy Astor's 1919 victory at the polls figures prominently in narratives of women’s political progress in Britain, the taunt thrown at her while campaigning at the Barbican earlier that year, “‘It’s your face that is carrying you through!’” figures nowhere in discussions of women’s entry into formal political life in Britain. Astor’s rejoinder, “‘No, it’s the heart behind it,’” points to a tension in her candidacy and subsequent political life that characterizes modern celebrity: between the superficial and the genuine, the artificial and the authentic. For Nancy Astor’s significance to British politics lies not merely in her having been the first woman to sit in Parliament, but instead in the convergence of that “first” with a number of other significant changes in British politics following the First World War. Examination of newspaper coverage, both American and British, of her entry into the House of Commons finds that contemporaries deployed the rhetoric of the cotillion, the music hall, and the cinema to describe her demeanor and her effect on the public. A “film star,” and “a personality,” rarely a politician in any masculine sense, Nancy Astor's political career of the 1920s provides an intriguing point of departure for consideration of a number of significant changes in interwar British politics: the impact of celebrity; concerns about Americanization; and anxieties about women’s changing political status in the wake of their enfranchisement.

Biographical Details:
Laura E. Nym Mayhall is associate professor of history at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She is the author of The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930 (Oxford University Press, 2003) as well as numerous articles on the political culture of militancy in Edwardian Britain. She is currently working on a book exploring the resonances of aristocratic celebrity on interwar Anglo-American political culture.


Among the supporters of Mrs Pankhurst who thronged the streets of Exeter when she was briefly imprisoned there in 1913 were two of the few women to become councillors on local authorities in Devon in the early 1920s: Juanita Maxwell Phillips (for the borough of Honiton and later for Devon County Council) and Edith Splatt (Exeter City Council).

Their participation in the movement for suffrage had unlocked talents for dogged commitment and public speaking, and strengthened their capacity to absorb criticism. In their new roles as councillors those talents were still of use, but the challenge for them as councillors was to create change by working within rather than outside traditional frameworks of power.

This paper uses the local government careers of these two women to analyse the different tactics they used in their council careers. Splatt, a journalist, acted

2 Sunday Pictorial, 9 November 1919.
throughout the interwar years as a ‘gadfly’ to Exeter City Council, and remained a voice for the inarticulate over issues such as the appointment of women police. Phillips, a wealthy middle-class woman, rose swiftly to become mayor and a dominant force in the community of Honiton in many capacities. On the county council, however, her influence is harder to identify.

The paper will consider the tactics that women in local government used to try to deliver the aspirations of the suffrage movement for a better engagement of women in the creation of social policy and the obstacles they faced in securing their goals.

**Biographical Details:**
Following a long career in the NHS Julia Neville recently completed her doctorate on local politics and health service provision in the 1930s and is now an Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Medical History at Exeter University. Her interest in the 'Aftermath of Suffrage' was fuelled by surprise at women's invisibility in health and welfare debates in Devon in the 1930s and curiosity about those pioneers who did seek to make a difference. She has recently worked with Devon County Council on early women councillors and with Honiton Senior Council on the celebration of Honiton's first woman mayor.

Laura Paterson (University of Dundee), “The relationship of citizenship and feminism in women's organisations 1918 to 1939”

With enfranchisement, new organisations were formed of women voters, representing the transformation of the women’s movement, which adapted to the success of achieving the vote. Although there was continuity with the earlier movement in terms of ideas and membership/leadership, there is evidence of a move towards mobilising women to use their vote and status to improve women’s opportunities and bring wider equality. The notion of citizenship appeared in newly formed women's organisations such as Women Citizens' Associations and Townswomen’s Guilds. Recent research by Valerie Wright (2008), Sarah Browne (2004) and Samantha Clements (2008) indicates the diversity and complexity of the interwar women's movement, which had been dismissed by some historians as ineffective. Historians such as Catriona Beaumont observed that campaigning for women's citizenship rights allowed mainstream women's organisations to attract ‘ordinary’ women as members, who would be threatened by the perceived challenge which feminism posed to the family.

From research conducted into Edinburgh and Dundee Women Citizens' Association (WCAs), it would appear that WCAs did not avoid confronting women's and feminist issues. However, it is interesting that they did not identify as a feminist organisation. The idea of educating women to exercise their citizenship rights and duties did find expression in the activities of the Association. In the paper, I will explore the meaning of citizenship to WCAs. What did the women of these organisations understand to be their duties and rights as citizens? Did citizenship take on a different meaning in different organisations? To what extent was feminism 'avoided' and why was this so? I believe this will provide valuable insight into the women’s movement in the period 1918-1939, between the so-called first and second waves.
June Purvis (University of Portsmouth), “EMMELINE PANKHURST IN THE AFTERMATH OF SUFFRAGE, 1918-1928”

Emmeline Pankhurst, the founder of the women-only Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) – which campaigned for the parliamentary vote for women in Edwardian Britain - became the most notorious of the women’s suffrage leaders. A powerful orator and charismatic leader, she was always in the thick of the action, whether leading her followers in a deputation to Parliament or undergoing 13 imprisonments where she went on hunger, thirst and sleep. During the First World War she called a halt to all ‘militant’ action for the vote and became a ‘patriotic feminist’, believing that women’s war work would win them their right to enfranchisement. But what happened to her after 1918, when certain categories of women over the age of thirty were granted the vote? She became a defender of the British Empire and a Conservative parliamentary candidate before her death on 14 June 1928, just one month before her seventieth birthday. This paper will explore her thoughts and action in the last ten years of her life, placing her within the social and political context of her time.

Sonya O. Rose “‘We are the Pioneers of What?’ Science, Technology and Women’s Work in the Aftermath of Women’s Suffrage”

This paper focuses on the life and work of Caroline Haslett who herself broke barriers by entering the male dominated profession of engineering, and who dedicated her life to advancing the domestic application of electricity and scientific management in order to liberate women from the drudgery of housework. Influenced by the campaign for women’s suffrage, her observations of the relentlessness of women’s labour in the home, and her fascination with science and engineering, Haslett promulgated her ideas through organizations such as the Women’s Engineering Association, the Electrical Association for Women (both of which she helped to found) and the British (and International) Federation of Business and Professional Women. The paper will explore both the ways in which the fight for and achievement of women’s suffrage appeared to Haslett to open doors for women, but at the same time served to blind her to issues of both class and gender. To Haslett, ‘woman’ I will argue, was understood to be a female person whose family could afford advanced household technology and who could then use those labour saving devices to enable her to advance her own independence and nondomestic interests. Being a modern woman meant continuing to be responsible for domestic life (with the economic capacity to afford the latest electrical equipment to help her) and having the capability (and right) to break down the sexual division of labour outside of the home but not within it.

Biographical Details:
Sonya O. Rose is Emeritus Professor of History, Sociology and Women’s Studies at the University of Michigan and Honorary Professor of History at the University of Warwick. She is the author of Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England and Which People’s War: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939-45, and What is Gender History?

Mari Takayanagi (King’s College London), ‘They have made their mark entirely out of proportion to their numbers’: Women and Parliamentary Committees, c.1918-1945

A leaflet issued after the Second World War by the ‘Women for Westminster’ campaign, titled ‘Our Women MPs: What They Have Done For Us’, declared: ‘Always
too few to counterbalance their 600 odd male colleagues, they have yet by debate and committee service made their mark on the law-making of the last 30 years in a degree entirely out of proportion to their numbers.

Of the two types of participation mentioned - by debate and by committee service - a number of historians have previously discussed the early women MPs and their contribution to debates in the chamber. However an analysis of the women MP's contribution to committee service is noticeably lacking. This paper will consider this hitherto neglected area, the role of women with regard to their contribution to Parliamentary committees, up to 1945. It will consider attendance, the number of committees on which women sat; on what kind of committees they sat; and their contribution. It will do so with particular reference to Parliamentary Select Committees, which investigate subjects, hear evidence and examine public policy and administration. It will also consider House of Commons Standing Committees, which consider bills in clause-by-clause detail as part of the legislative process. It will additionally explore other ways in which women contributed to Parliamentary committee work, for example as witnesses, special advisers and committee staff.

**Biographical Details:**
Mari Takayanagi is a part-time postgraduate student at the Centre for Contemporary British History, King's College London, and her doctoral research aims to study the different ways in which women interacted with Parliament c.1918-1945. She read Modern History as an undergraduate at St. John's College, Oxford, graduating with first-class honours. She is also a full-time professional archivist, with an MA in Archives and Records Management from University College London, and has been Archivist at the Parliamentary Archives since April 2003.

David Thackeray (University of Exeter), “Mrs. Maggs goes shopping: Party appeals to the female consumer in the 1920s”

In 1928 the Women's Unionist Organisation claimed one million members, a figure four times the support base enjoyed by Labour's women's section. And yet, the housewives' vote was viewed by some contemporaries as being key to Labour's election victory in 1929. This paper explores the key role that consumer issues played in party appeals to women during the first decade of their enfranchisement. The Conservative women's organisation developed a substantial support base from across the classes during the early 1920s. Formal membership was widened further after 1926 as a result of the Conservatives' association with the cause of preferential trade with the Empire. Nonetheless, this paper argues that Labour could also develop effective appeals to the female consumer. Their election victory in 1929 owed much to their ability to promote a more democratic appeal to the female voter than the Conservatives, aligning themselves with causes like hire purchase insurance and the development of a Consumers' Council. The idea that the Conservatives enjoyed an inter-war 'hegemony' neglects the sense of instability and uncertainty which the party experienced throughout these years. This paper argues that historians have perhaps exaggerated the Conservatives' success in appealing to the newly enfranchised female voter, and that more attention needs to be paid to the competitive dialogue between the parties who appealed for the female consumers' vote.

**Biographical Details:**
David Thackeray is currently a lecturer at the University of Exeter, having previously taught at Queen’s College, Oxford. He has published on the subject of the Conservative women's organisation in the Journal of British Studies and is currently...
writing a book exploring how the Conservative party was able to adapt to democratic politics during the early decades of the twentieth century.

**Pat Thane (King’s College London), “What the British Women's Movement Achieved between the Wars and why it has been Forgotten”**

The paper will examine women’s political activism between the wars and their achievements, in political parties and non-party associations, national and transnational. It will be located within a discussion of the growth and importance of associational life and scepticism about political parties, among women and men, in this period and of the parallel growth of transnational associations. It will conclude with speculation about why this activism became hidden from history in the post-war period when political parties were resurgent and the women’s movement relatively (though not absolutely) quiescent.

**Jessica Thurlow (Aurora University), “‘A Woman Against the Tide’: Feminists and Religion in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain”**

This paper will provide an examination of some of the intersections between faith and feminism in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s, and discuss the challenges of writing about, and the need for historical analysis on, women and religion during this period. I will focus on the activities of St. Joan’s Social and Political Alliance, a self-identified feminist Catholic organization founded during the 1910s. St. Joan’s was one of only two British feminism organizations which had consultative status to the United Nations, and its work provides an important example of the ways in which Catholic women made claims for women’s involvement in public life and had shaped the feminist movement for a half century. I will also examine the connections between self-identified feminist organizations (there were only a small handful in the ’40s and ’50s, many of which were active during the Suffrage Movement) and the movement for the ordination of women within the Anglican Church. Significantly, the ordination of a deaconess to the priesthood in 1944 spurred feminists to push harder for women’s ordination, and brought into stark view the multiple ways in which the Second World War and women’s political citizenship impacted the Anglican Church. While the 1940s and ’50s have been portrayed by historians as the nadir of twentieth-century feminism, I argue that not only was feminist activity strong and more than often shouldered by older suffrage advocates, but that religious identity was a crucial motivating factor for many women's political activity and that religious institutions and dogma became a battleground in which to contest gender inequalities and norms. Examining feminism and religion together during this period highlights the numerous gaps in our understanding of twentieth-century feminist and women’s history. It also highlights the limitations of histories on the ordination of women in the Anglican Church and in our understanding of the lives and beliefs of Catholic and Anglican women in Britain.

**Biographical details:** Jessica Thurlow is an Assistant Professor of History at Aurora University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan's Department of History in 2006 and her dissertation is titled “Continuity and Change in British Feminism, c. 1940-1960.” Prof. Thurlow specializes in contemporary European and British History, women's and gender history, feminist history and the history of religion. She teaches a broad range of courses in European, Middle Eastern and East Asian history, as well as historical methodology. She also teaches travel abroad courses to Europe.
Richard Toye (University of Exeter), “The House of Commons in the Aftermath of Suffrage”

This paper investigates how the House of Commons evolved as a ‘community of practice’ in the years during which Britain gained its first experience of a universal franchise, a period which also saw financial crisis and mass unemployment. It draws attention to the following questions:

How did the extensions of the franchise in 1918 and 1928 (and the election of the first women MPs and the new influx of Labour MPs after the Great War) affect the culture of the House of Commons? To what extent did post-war Commons practices mark a break with the past? For example, what was the legacy of the now-defunct Irish Parliamentary Party?

What part did Commons rhetoric play in what Alan Finlayson and James Martin have labelled the ‘symbolic ritual dimension of politics’? How did the politics of clothing and gesture, the competition for dominance of political space, and the construction of ‘image events’ for wider public consumption, play out in a parliamentary setting? How were MPs’ rhetorical practices (such as symbolic disruption tactics) understood and contested? How did these practices relate to wider societal concerns, for example through some left-wing MPs’ use of them to present themselves as champions of the poor?

Did the Commons decline in these years, as assumed by many historians and contemporaries? If so, what did ‘decline’ mean and to what extent did the culture of the Commons reflect or cause this?

Philippe Vervaecke (Université Lille 3 Sciences Humaines et Sociales), “‘Doing Great Public Work Privately’? Female Antis after the “Triumph of Feminism” in the Interwar Years”

Building upon the study of the trajectories of the leading female Antis carried out by Julia Bush in Women Against the Vote: Female Anti-Suffragism in Britain (Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 290-296), this paper systematically analyses the way female anti-suffrage activists adjusted to the post-enfranchisement context in 1918 and 1928. Within that group, particular attention is to be paid to Conservative Antis and to the way they adapted to the post-war conditions.

Discussion shall first consist in a thorough survey of 64 prominent Antis and their public activities after the Great War. Our findings on the interwar (and pre-war) public career of female highlight the complex and diverse nature of this group. As pointed out by Bush, many among female Antis were committed philanthropists before joining the Women’s National Anti-Suffrage League, and some were active in the field of educational reform and local government. The group under study quite naturally reveals much post-war reluctance on the part of most former Antis to adjust to the new political context of party politics and to political activism proper, even in Conservative ranks. We suggest that opposition to women’s suffrage translated into dislike for the “party machines” in the interwar years. Indeed, many Antis – though not all as shall be seen – altogether abstained from being involved in party politics, keeping their public work to more traditional channels such as local government, charitable bodies or leagues more or less independent from formal ties with existing party structures. The paper also suggests that even before 1918, some female Antis had been fairly successful in terms of becoming directly involved in political affairs
through parliamentary committees, a strategy of discreet influence from within to which some of them remained wedded in the interwar years.

As most of the sample is constituted of Conservative women (Beatrice Chamberlain, Lady Margaret Jersey, Lady Talbot, Mrs Yorke Bevan to name just a few), emphasis is placed in the second part of the paper upon the way the group Bush labels “imperialists”, mostly constituted of women active in Conservative circles, adjusted to the post-war context. At that stage, the interesting case of Lady Jersey, prominent both in the Victoria and the Primrose League until the late 1930s, is to be highlighted. The paper contends that Lady Jersey’s continued commitment to the Primrose League, where men and women worked together, reveals how much many former Antis viewed single-sex political organisations with mistrust, thus keeping their allegiance to gender-inclusive leagues. Similarly, the Victoria League owed its continued success in the interwar years (a fact incidentally overlooked by historians of that organisation) to the fact that it offered an acceptable outlet for former Antis who wished to remain active in public life while remaining aloof from the “rough-and tumble” of party politics and elections.

Valerie Wright (University of Dundee), “Post-Suffrage Scotland: Continuity and Change in the Women’s Movement c. 1918-1939 – The Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for Equal Citizenship and the Scottish Co-operative Women’s Guild”

Many recent contributions to the historiography of the interwar years have successfully shown that feminism and the women’s movement more generally was not moribund in this period, as has previously been suggested. The partial enfranchisement of women was not an end to the struggle for female equality but rather a powerful impetus for further activity. This was true at a nation wide level and also in Scotland. Unfortunately Scottish women have been largely neglected in accounts of the women’s movement in the interwar years, which have traditionally focused on developments in the national feminist movement, as represented by national organisations and prominent English feminists. Within such work ‘British’ can often translate as ‘English’. More recent contributions to the historiography of the interwar women’s movement have continued this trend, although such research perhaps more explicitly focuses on England. One notable exception is Breitenbach and Thane’s Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century, which considers the experience of women’s involvement in politics both formal and informal throughout Britain. This paper seeks to further rectify the marginalisation of Scottish women by providing an account of the women’s movement in Scotland by considering the work of two women’s organisations, the Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for Equal Citizenship (formerly known as the Glasgow and West of Scotland Suffrage Society) and the Scottish Co-operative Women’s Guild. Both of these organisations were active during the campaign for the enfranchisement of women, with their work continuing in the interwar years. This case study approach will facilitate an exploration of the continuity between the suffrage era and the interwar years, which in turn will allow consideration of the changes that the partial enfranchisement of women made to the work of these two organisations. Where appropriate the work of these Scottish organisations will be compared to their English contemporaries in order to place them within the broader British context.