Sources for the Study of Women’s Suffrage
Front Cover Illustrations – left to right:

Poster advertising a suffrage demonstration in London, c. 1913
(Sheffield Archives: SY 633/G1/1)

Women munitions workers at Cammell Laird, Sheffield c. 1916
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s00540)

Election flier for Eleanor Barton, Labour candidate for Attercliffe in the 1920 council elections
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP1809 S)

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Introduction

This booklet lists sources available within Sheffield Local Studies Library and Sheffield Archives for the study of the campaign by women to vote in local and national elections. It includes information on earlier political action by women such as the campaign to abolish the slave trade and slavery and it continues through to the success of local women councillors in the first elections after women won the right to vote in 1918.

It is not a detailed history of the suffrage campaign; it merely points the reader who wishes to carry out their own research to what is available within Sheffield Local Studies and Archives.

Many other areas of resources for researching women’s political activism have been left out – simply because they demand more detailed guide in their own right – women marching against unemployment in the 1930s or campaigning against pit closures in the 1980s are just two examples of related study areas.

As more items are catalogued and the collections are used by researchers it is likely that additional references to women’s suffrage will come to light. More detailed searching of our catalogues for related terms may reveal additional material. It is always worth contacting the service points or checking our website for updates to this Study Guide. Our contact details are on the back cover.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft published ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Sheffield Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society established</td>
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<td>1837</td>
<td>Sheffield Ladies’ Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>The Sheffield Complete Suffrage Association was established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Mrs C Ash addressed the Sheffield Female Political Association. A resolution calling for female suffrage was passed and presented to the House of Lords.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>The first women’s suffrage committee was formed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Certain women ratepayers eligible to stand for election to local school boards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Sarah Ruth Wilson first woman to be elected as a member of Sheffield School Board. In 1888 she was appointed chair of the Board’s School Management Committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Elizabeth Chappell, elected to Sheffield Poor Law Union. She represented the Brightside Ward for the Liberal Party.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>The Women’s Social and Political Union was set up by Emmeline Pankhurst.</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst were sent to prison and were labelled suffragettes.</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Emily Davison threw herself in front of a horse at the Derby and was killed.</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Maud Cavanagh and Annie Crowther elected the first women on the Ecclesall Bierlow Poor Law Union.</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Certain women ratepayers eligible to stand for election to borough and county councils.</td>
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<td>1907-1914</td>
<td>Militant suffragette campaign.</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>Attercliffe by-election at which the suffrage question played a part.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>First women police officers in Sheffield appointed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Four million women were at work in factories, on farms and in hospitals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>All women aged over 30 were given the right to vote (as were all men aged 21 and above).</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>Eleanor Barton the first woman elected to Sheffield Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Nancy Astor was the first woman to take her seat in Parliament. (A month earlier a woman Irish Nationalist had been elected but she refused to take her seat.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>3% of Sheffield’s councillors were women.</td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>Margaret Bondfield was appointed a government minister – the first woman to hold such office.</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>All women over 21 were given the right to vote – universal suffrage had finally been achieved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Ann Eliza Longden took office as Sheffield’s first female mayor.</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>Ann Eliza Longden was the first woman to be made an honorary ‘freeman’ of the City of Sheffield. By 2008, of over 70 freemen granted since 1899, 6 had been granted to women.</td>
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<td>1950s</td>
<td>Grace Tebbutt believed to be the first female leader of Sheffield City Council.</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Voting age lowered from 21 to 18.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>24% of Sheffield’s councillors were women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Joan Maynard elected Sheffield’s first female Member of Parliament, representing the Brightside Constituency.</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Margaret Thatcher elected as Britain’s first woman prime minister.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>33% of Sheffield’s councillors were women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>33% of Sheffield’s councillors were women.</td>
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</table>
Early political activism: anti-slave trade and anti-slavery campaigning

Women did not get the chance to vote in national elections until 1918, and even then not all women were eligible. Universal suffrage wasn’t granted until 1928. However, women were involved in political campaigning in the early 19th century. A good example of this is the campaign to abolish slavery.

In the 1820s a national anti-slavery society was established calling for gradual abolition; however some groups, notably a group of women in Birmingham called for immediate abolition. A Sheffield Ladies Anti—Slavery Society soon followed the establishment of the one in Birmingham. Its literature stated it was engaged in the cause of ‘light, of liberty, of knowledge, of mercy, of truth and love’. The society was dissolved following emancipation in 1833, but it was later re-established to continue campaigning against slavery in other parts of the world.

A number of the Society’s annual reports have survived and these tell us of its activities:

During 1829-1830 the Sheffield Society:

♦ Distributed 100 anti-slavery Reporters and other pamphlets

♦ Printed 500 copies of a speech of Mr Brougham in Parliament relating to West Indian slavery

♦ Distributed 1500 copies of ‘an appeal of the Friends of the Negro to the British people on behalf of the Slaves in their Colonies’. This pamphlet was mainly given ‘to the poor of this town’, through female collectors and schools.
The Sheffield Women’s Political Association

The struggle by British women for suffrage began in the mid-nineteenth century and Sheffield has the distinction of being the first known place in the country to have formed a women’s suffrage society run by women for women – The Sheffield Women’s Political Association. The inaugural meeting was held on 26th February 1851 at the Democratic Temperance Hotel, and was reported in The Sheffield Free Press and Rotherham and Barnsley Advertiser on 1st March.

The Sheffield Free Press and Rotherham and Barnsley Advertiser, 1st March 1851 with the address from the ‘women to the democracy of Sheffield ... to .. Beloved Sisters.’
(Sheffield Local Studies Library)
World War One: war work

As men were called up for military service in the First World War, many services and industries, including the big Sheffield steel firms had to look elsewhere for workers, and began to recruit women for jobs formerly closed to them. Firms such as Sheffield Simplex Motor Works Ltd. at Tinsley, and Cammell Laird and Co. Ltd employed women in shell manufacture and file grinding. By 1915 Cammell Laird claimed to have the largest forgings in the world for 15 inch guns.

Pictures issued by Cammell Laird showed an idealised view of working conditions
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s00540 and s00548)

Tram conductresses, c. 1917
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield t03345)
Anti-Women workers sentiment

The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen founded in 1880 was a trade union for men. During the First World War women started to do many jobs which had previously only been done by men, some in heavy industry and in particular munitions work. This created resentment in many cases as men perceived the women as a threat to their own jobs, especially as wages were lower for women. The resolution (below) passed by ASLEF was clearly as a result of just this situation.

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**ASLEF minute book containing a resolution about women workers, 1916**
(Sheffield Archives: ASLEF/18)

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*That in view of the fact that women have been introduced on the railways as shunters and are also learning signalman’s duties and rumours being current that they are about to be placed on the footplate, the branch request the General Secretary in the event of any attempt being made to introduce female labour on the footplate, to immediately call the [committee] together to take whatever steps may be necessary to protect us and if necessary call a stoppage of the footplate staff ....*

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Once the war was over women were no longer wanted in the essential industries because the returning soldiers needed employment, and women found themselves forced back into their homes, thus losing their new-found freedom and economic independence.
Political campaigning up to 1918

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) as founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst specifically to campaign for the franchise to be extended to women. Since 1869 only women rate-payers could vote and then only in local elections. The WSPU aimed at extending the vote to all women in national elections.

The first of several Suffrage Bills failed in 1870 and these defeats encouraged the formation of a much more concentrated campaign. There were marches and rallies in many towns, and in some cases demonstrations became quite violent with women chaining themselves to railings and being arrested. They took part in hunger strikes in prison and many were force-fed.

The militant side of the suffrage movement was very lively in Sheffield, and Mrs Pankhurst sent her daughter Adela as a local organiser for the Sheffield WSPU. A ‘suffrage shop’ was opened at 26-28 Chapel Walk, and in 1908 an attempt was made to enter the Cutlers’ Feast, at which the First Lord of the Admiralty was the guest speaker. Adela Pankhurst disguised herself as a kitchen maid and tried to enter the Cutlers’ Hall, but was stopped by the police. She made a speech from the Town Hall steps, was moved on by the police and went back to the Cutlers’ Hall but failed to get in.

During the First World War many women readily assisted in the war effort and their ability to do men’s work was proved. This helped towards the passing of the Representation of the People Act in 1918 which enabled women over 30 to vote. It was not until 1928 that women were given equal status with men and the voting age was reduced to 21.
Electoral success from 1919

In 1918 women aged 30 and above won the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Ten years later, all women aged over 21 were allowed to vote.
Early political activism: anti-slave trade and anti-slavery campaigning

See our study guide entitled *Towards Liberty - Slavery, the Slave Trade, Abolition and Emancipation* available to download from our website www.sheffield.gov.uk/libraries/archives-and-local-studies/publications (click on research guides).

Newspapers

Relevant articles and features may appear in local newspapers. As these are mainly unindexed they can be time consuming to search. The main titles available at Sheffield Local Studies Library include: *Iris or Sheffield Advertiser for the Northern Counties*, 1794 – 1856; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1855 – 1986; *Sheffield Mercury*, 1807 – 1848; *Sheffield Telegraph* (weekly) 1989 – date; *Sheffield Independent* 1819 – 1938 and the *Star* 1873 - date

Sheffield Free press and Rotherham and Barnsley Advertiser – an address delivered by Mrs C Ash at a meeting of the Sheffield Female Political Association, 26 Feb 1851
*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: newspapers. Typescript available at MP 581 L)*

Photographs

Picture Sheffield (www.picturesheffield.com) is an online database of photographs and illustrations from the Local Studies Library collections. Searching on the names of key individuals and subjects will reveal a number of useful images. A few have been highlighted below:

Photograph (taken from a newspaper report) of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies Pilgrimage leaving Sheffield via Pinstone Street, 7 Jul 1913. The caption reads ‘On march to London, a party of law abiding suffragettes have spent the weekend in Sheffield. They departed on the next stage of their journey yesterday morning, and our picture was obtained as they proceeded along Pinstone Street, their ‘law abiding’ banner being held at a doubtful angle.
*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s02941)*

Photograph (taken from a newspaper report) of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies Pilgrimage at Rotherham, 4 Jul 1913
*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s02947)*
Photograph of successful Labour Women in Sheffield City Council election, Nov 1929
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s12604)

Photographs (taken from newspaper reports) of meetings during the by-election at Attercliffe, 3 May 1909
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s02942, s02943, s02944, s02944)

Photograph of a meeting of the Sheffield Women’s Social and Political Union in the Lower Albert Hall, 13 Mar 1911
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s02945)

Munitions Workers at Firth Brown, 1914-18
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s09244)

Post-Women and telegram ‘girls’ around 1917
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield s09248, s09249, s09304 t03345)

Suffrage Societies

Barnsley Women’s Suffrage Society, minutes, 1913 – 1933
(Sheffield Archives SY 633)

Other Documents and printed items from the 19th and early 20th century

Election leaflets and flyers for local government elections (i.e. school boards, boards of guardians), by-elections and general elections – various dates
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: various references – check the catalogue and card indexes for details)

Sheffield School Board minutes and papers, 1870 - 1903
(Sheffield Archives: SY 350)

Pamphlets and correspondence relating to women’s suffrage, 1871 – 1882
(Sheffield Archives: MD 6009)

Items relating to women’s suffrage and the election of 1885
(Sheffield Archives: MD 5942)

Poster regarding ‘A Meeting in support of the claims of women to the parliamentary vote . . . will be held in the Attercliffe Vestry Hall, on Thursday, Nov. 3rd, 1904’ (North of England Women’s Suffrage Society)
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 3639 M)
During the Attercliffe by-election of 1909 the National Women’s Social and Political Union sought the support of parliamentary candidates. (Sheffield Archives: Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Executive Committee minutes, 1909 LD 1629 p. 221/2; Delegate Meetings minutes, 1908-1912 LD1635; Darnall Ward Committee of the Sheffield Labour Representative Committee minutes 1906- 1909 MD 3354; Schedule of open air meetings in Darnall Ward c. 1907 MD 3359; Attercliffe Independent Labour Party subscription book 1903 – 1922 MD 3356/1; election handbill of Joseph Pointer 1909 MD6134; photograph of Pointer signing the Women’s Suffrage petition MD6137. See also MP 105 L, MP 2111 M and MP 6135 at the Local Studies Library).

Sheffield women’s effort for Serbia: a public meeting will be held in the Montgomery Hall, Wednesday, July 7th, [1915] (National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (Sheffield Branch)) (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 3976 S)

Letter from Adela Pankhurst with a copy of ‘Votes for Women’, 1911 (Sheffield Archives AC/71/17a-b)

National Women’s Social and Political Union handbill advertising excursion to London c. 1909 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 1229 S)

Extracts from a 1911 Sheffield Directory showing the addresses of Miss Adela Pankhurst and The Women’s Social and Political Union (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 3640 M)

Election manifesto of Eleanor Barton, Labour candidate for Attercliffe in the local election, 1920 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 1809 S)

Obituary of Florence Cheetham (an early Labour councillors for Brightside), 18 Feb 1929 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: The Sheffield Obituary 1850-1975 by Peter Harvey)

Edward Carpenter (1844 – 1929) (a local socialist writer and campaigner on a wide range of issues) spoke on the subject of women’s suffrage and corresponded with a number of female political campaigners on the suffrage issue. Note: a microfilm reader should be booked in advance of a visit if you wish to consult Carpenter items.

Women’s suffrage – notes for a lecture c. 1909 (Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/165)
Letter from Miss KD Courtney, Secretary of North of England Society for Womens Suffrage, Manchester [Lancashire], relating to Carpenter speaking at an event, 31 Oct 1909
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/271/110)

Letter from Bessie Ford, about the suffragette movement, 15 Jun 1908
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/356/32/3)

Letter from Isabella O Ford of Adel, near Leeds, Yorkshire - comments on Olive Schreiner, the suffrage movement and the home rule movement, 25 Aug 1913
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/386/220)

Letters from Charlotte Despard of London; Treasurer of the Womens Freedom League, 1908 – 1910
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/386/147, 148, 175)

Letters from Lady Constance Lytton (1869-1923), of Knebworth, Hertfordshire, suffragette, 1909 – 1910 and 1917
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/386/164, 168, 170, 281)

Suffragettes’ Demonstration: picture with Edward Carpenter
Cutting from Manchester Evening News, 26 Oct 1908
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/NC/2/11)

Press cutting relating to Womens Suffrage, pre-1924
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/NC/3/57)

Letter from M or M P Schreiner concerning suffrage in Natal, South Africa, 27 Aug 1909
(Sheffield Archives: Carpenter/mss/271/109)

Papers of political parties and politicians

Joan Maynard (1921 – 1998) Member of Parliament for Sheffield Brightside 1974 – 1987: papers. Note: Four weeks notice is required to access this collection. Many of the papers may have restricted access.
(Sheffield Archives: MPA)

Joan Maynard: a passionate socialist by Kristine Mason O’Conner (Politicos, 2003)
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: B MAYN S. Lending copies also available in numerous community libraries ref. B MAYN)
Helen Jackson (1939 - ) Member of Parliament for Sheffield Hillsborough 1992 – 2005: papers. Note: Four weeks notice is required to access this collection. Many of the papers may have restricted access. (Sheffield Archives: MP9)

Sylvia Anginotti, Liberal Democrat Member of Sheffield City Council, 1997 - 1999: papers. Note: Permission is required to access these papers. (Sheffield Archives: MD 7523)

Eleanor Barton – extract from Dictionary of Labour History Vol. 1, 1972 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 4347 M)

The Hard Way Up – the autobiography of Hannah Mitchell by Geoffrey Mitchell (Faber, 1968) (Sheffield Local Studies Library: B.MITC S)

Suffragists and suffragettes: Sheffield women campaign for the vote, 1851-1914 by Richard J Hoare, 2007. (Sheffield Local Studies Library: PAMP 563. Lending copies also available in numerous community libraries ref. 324.623. Copy also available at Sheffield Archives: HOA/LOCAL))

Molly Murphy: suffragette and socialist; autobiography by Molly Murphy with an introduction by Ralph Darlington (Institute of Social Research, University of Salford, 1998) (Sheffield Local Studies Library: B.MURP SST)

Books and Pamphlets on the history of women’s political life

The Women’s Suffrage Movement in South Yorkshire by J H Copley c. 1965 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: 324.4274 SQ)


Grace Tebbutt obituary in Quality of Sheffield, Jul/Aug 1983 (page 50) (Sheffield Local Studies Library: 380 SQ)

Labour Women’s Advisory Council (Sheffield) celebration of 50 years of women’s Suffrage, 1968 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 1614 M)
Civic Reception: 50 years of contribution of women to the life of the city, 1968
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 1598 S)

BBC Radio Sheffield leaflet: That's how it was, 20th cent
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: 942.74 SST)

Brief note on Adela Pankhurst’s work for the Women’s Social and Political
Union in Westside 1989, p. 12
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: 052.74 SQ)

Article on 50 years of household suffrage, G S Leader, 19th cent
(Sheffield Archives: LC/2/5)

The Suffragettes Movement in Stocksbridge, Holberry Society Bulletin, Feb
1979
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: 331.85 SQ)
Sheffield Archives and Local Studies services collect and preserve original records and printed material relating to Sheffield and the surrounding area.

The information dates from the 12th century to the present and relates to Sheffield, South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire.

Included are extensive collections of books ● pamphlets ● photographs ● church registers ● newspapers ● census records ● minutes ● diaries ● films ● maps ● deeds ● records from schools ● hospitals ● businesses and charities ● family estates ● personal papers etc.

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