



GENERAL GUIDANCE ON SOURCES FOR RESEARCHING THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN SCOTLAND

This section provides general guidance on the types of sources that can be used to research the women's suffrage movement in Scotland. The sections on the different phases of the movement also indicate the specific sources used for that section.

Some types of sources, such as the records of suffrage organisations, have significant gaps as few records seem to have survived, though it remains possible that not all surviving records have been identified. Other types of sources, such as newspapers, present a challenge by their sheer volume, and many local papers have not yet been digitised. It is helpful therefore to have an idea about specific dates or periods to search for - these may be identified through the key texts listed below or through other publications listed in the longer bibliography.

Key texts

There is an ever growing literature on the women's suffrage movement in Britain and Ireland as well as the wider international movement, and some of these publications may contain references to Scottish activities. We are listing here only the key reference books and texts relevant to the movement in Scotland, and which help identify the key sources for research.

In addition to the reference books below, Leah Leneman's [*A Guid Cause*](#) (1991) drew extensively on archival research, and indicates the types of activities taking place in many locations in Scotland, and the key activists involved. Sarah Pedersen's [*The Scottish Suffragettes and the Press*](#) (1917) focuses on the militant campaign between the years 1905 and 1914, and is particularly useful in indicating the types of coverage to look for in newspapers. It also provides examples of local organisations and actions which could be further researched.

Reference books

Crawford, Elizabeth, [*The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey*](#) (London: Routledge, 2006)

Ewan, Elizabeth, Sue Innes, Sian Reynolds and Rose Pipes, [*The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*](#) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006)

Orr, Lesley, 'Protest and Politics', in Esther Breitenbach, Linda Fleming, Karly Kehoe and Lesley Orr (eds), [*Scottish Women: A Documentary History*](#) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 244-284.

Histories of the Scottish movement

King, Elspeth, *The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement* (Glasgow: People's Palace Museum, 1978)

King, Elspeth, 'The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement' in Esther Breitenbach and Eleanor Gordon (eds), *Out of Bounds: Women in Scottish Society* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 121-150.

Leneman, Leah, *A Guid Cause: The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991)

Leneman, Leah, *The Scottish Suffragettes*, (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2017)

Pedersen, Sarah, *The Scottish Suffragettes and the Press* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

Smitley, Megan, *The feminine public sphere: Middle-Class women in civic life in Scotland, c. 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)

Smyth, J. J., *Labour in Glasgow 1896-1936: socialism, suffrage, sectarianism* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000)

Smyth, J.J, 'Rents, Peace and Votes: Working Class Women and Political Activity in the First World War' in Breitenbach and Gordon (eds), *Out of Bounds* (1992), pp. 174-196.

Local histories

Brewster, Lynn M, *Suffrage in Stirling: the Struggle for Women's Votes* (Stirling: Jamieson Munro Trust, 2002)

Leneman, Leah, *Martyrs in our midst: Dundee, Perth and the forcible feeding of suffragettes* (Dundee: Abertay Historical Society, 1993)

Leneman, Leah, 'Dundee and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1907-1914' in Christopher Whatley (ed), *The Remaking of Juteopolis* (Abertay Historical Society, 1991), pp. 80-96.

Taylor, Marsali, *Women's Suffrage in Shetland* (2010)

West Lothian Local History Library, *Suffragettes in West Lothian* (2014)

Watson, Norman, *Dundee's Suffragettes* (Perth, 1990)

Bibliography

For an extended bibliography which also covers women in school boards and local government, and women's organisations in the inter-war years, follow the link here ['Bibliography: campaigns for women's suffrage and representation in Scotland 1867-1928'](#).

Records of organisations

We know that few of the records of Scottish branches of Women's Suffrage Societies, Women's Social and Political Union, and the Women's Freedom League have survived, and, unfortunately some of the surviving records are held outside Scotland, most of them at the Women's Library, London School of Economics.

In addition to these suffrage organisations, there were many more organisations which were committed to women's suffrage, or which organised around the idea of women's citizenship after 1918, while anti-suffrage organisations were also active in the decade before the enfranchisement of women in 1918. Women also actively debated enfranchisement in party political organisations from the 1880s onwards.

To identify whether any records of suffrage or anti-suffrage organisations exist in your area, you can search the [Scottish Archive Network Catalogue](#) (SCAN). Follow this up (particularly since the listings on SCAN may not be comprehensive) by

approaching the local archivist at your local library. They should be able to help identify any records of organisations, information about prominent local activists, or local newspapers or other relevant publications.

Other possible sources of information held at local level include council archives, museums, local heritage and history groups. Suffrage society branches often submitted letters and petitions to councils, for example over getting the municipal franchise as well as asking for support for the parliamentary franchise. Museums may have memorabilia, banners, postcards, leaflets or photographs. Local groups may be able to help with local accounts and photographs, and may have come across suffrage activity in the context of support for the war effort during WWI, as many suffrage groups channelled their energies into supporting the Scottish Women's Hospitals during the war years.

Political party archives

Archives for the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Parties and the Scottish Liberal Party are held at the [National Library of Scotland](#) (NLS); Scottish Labour Party archives are held at [Glasgow City Archives](#). Archives for local associations are held at various locations, including the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, university libraries, city and council archives. However, some party archives may not reveal much about women's activities or about debates on suffrage, and newspapers may be a better source of information.

Individual activists

For information on the political activism of individuals a good place to start is the [Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women](#). This contains an index listing entries on women in political and public life, including political parties, the suffrage movement, parliamentary and local politics. These indicate the key sources of information, including biographies, autobiographies, and personal papers, although much of the information for entries has been gleaned from contemporary publications such as women's suffrage journals, and from newspaper coverage and obituaries. Further information about individuals can also be researched via traditional family history sources: births, marriages and deaths, valuation rolls, and censuses.

1911 Census

The Women's Freedom League and the Women's Social and Political Union urged women to refuse to comply with the census of 1911, to protest against the continuing denial of votes to women. Since the 1911 census data has been released a detailed study has been carried out of data in England in order to assess the level of non-compliance, [Vanishing for the vote: suffrage, citizenship and the battle for the census](#) (2014), by Jill Liddington with Elizabeth Crawford. No comparable study has been carried out for Scotland. However, the WEA research in the Highlands found clear evidence of suffrage supporters giving false information to the census, and also found one woman who refused to provide any details at all. More investigation of 1911 census data would certainly provide further examples.

Journals and newspapers

Suffrage and anti-suffrage journals

Women's journals and those relating to women's suffrage - for and against - often provided coverage of activities in Scotland. These include the following journals available at the National Library of Scotland:

Englishwoman's Review (later *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions*) (1866-1910)
Common Cause (1913-1917) [National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies]
The Vote (1909-1933) [Womens' Freedom League]
Votes for Women (1907-1916) [Women's Social and Political Union]
The Suffragette (1912-1915) [Women's Social and Political Union]
Anti-Suffrage Review (1909-1918) [National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage]
 [The NLS does not always have complete runs of these journals. Some complete runs, such as that for *Common Cause* are available at the Women's Library, London School of Economics]

Women's Suffrage Journal (1870-1890) Edited by Lydia Becker, and published between 1870 and 1890. Available at Heinonline:
http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/wmsuffpr4&div=8&g_sent=1&asa_token=&collection=journals

Political newspapers and journals

Available at the NLS:

Primrose League Gazette (1887-1988)

Labour Leader (1889-1922) [ILP]

New Leader (1922-1946) [ILP]

Forward (1906-1960)

Scottish Co-operator (1898-1974)

[The NLS does not always have complete runs of these newspapers]

Scottish Women's Liberal Magazine (1909-1914) [British Library]

Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Review (1909-1916) [British Library; Women's Library, London School of Economics]

Scottish broadsheet and local newspapers

Scottish and local newspapers are likely to be the best source of information on local organisations and their activities. Earlier studies, such as those by Elspeth King and Leah Leneman, were carried out before digitisation of newspapers, and their research made limited use of newspaper coverage.

Local newspapers are particularly useful as it was a common practice to place an advert for meetings, particularly those with outside speakers, and then for a report of the meeting to be published subsequently. Such reports often named office bearers and others attending the meeting, as well as summarising the topics discussed. However, only some local newspapers have been digitised. The best place to start is at your local library or by asking local archivists, who will be able to tell you which newspapers were being published locally in your area. You can also consult Alice Mackenzie, *Newsplan: Report of the Newsplan project in Scotland* (1994) at the NLS. The NLS also has an online guide to Scottish newspaper indexes at <http://www.nls.uk/collections/newspapers/indexes/index.cfm>

Electronic resources such as the British Newspaper Archive [British and Irish newspapers, 1710-1955], Nineteenth Century British Library Newspapers, Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals, the Historical Scotsman, etc, can be accessed through subscribing institutions, which includes university libraries and the NLS. These archives hold only a relatively small selection of Scottish newspapers.

NLS cardholders have unrestricted access to the British Newspaper Archive from their reading rooms, and some public libraries also provide online access to this archive (usually to those holding a reader's ticket).

Personal and family papers

Entries in the [Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women](#) indicate what sources are available about individuals, including personal and family papers. Note that information about the suffrage movement may be contained in the papers of members of parliament, male party activists, and so on, not just in papers left by women.

Online resources

National Library of Scotland: 'A Guid Cause... The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland'

See <https://suffragettes.nls.uk/sources>

British Online Archives have some documents from the women's suffrage movement in Scotland - minutes from the Glasgow and West of Scotland Women's Suffrage Society and its successor organisation the Glasgow Society for Equal Citizenship, from 1902-1933. Payment is required to use this resource: there is a one-week license for £20, or a one-month license for £40.

See <https://microform.digital/boa/collections>

SCRAN: Scran is a Scottish online resources for educational use by the public, schools, further education and higher education. It presents over 500,000 images and sounds contributed by museums, galleries, archives and the media. There are some images related to the women's suffrage movement on the SCRAN database at <https://www.scran.ac.uk/>

Website summarising the history of the British movement and the relevant legislation:

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/>

Women's and local history websites

Dundee Women's Trail: <http://www.dundeewomenstrail.org.uk>

Dornoch: <http://www.historylinks.org.uk/dornoch-history>

Glasgow Women's Library: <https://womenslibrary.org.uk>

<https://womensuffragescotland.wordpress.com/further-information/general-guidance-sources-for-researching-the-womens-suffrage-movement-in-scotland/>

Esther Breitenbach



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

Some material on this website is not being made available under the terms of this licence.

These are:

Third-Party materials that are being used under fair use or with permission (photography owned by archives, blog contributors or from WikiMedia Commons).

The respective copyright/Creative Commons licence details for use of third-party material should be consulted.