

# LOOKING FOR LADIES

## FINDING WOMEN IN LOCAL RESOURCES

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Women's philanthropy in Northampton is deeply entwined with the Boot and Shoe Industry. Many of the manufacturers were heavily involved in political, religious and general civic matters and as a result so were their wives and daughters. Finding women in a local history study such as this can be challenging. By considering a variety of local resources, however, it is possible to gain an understand of the philanthropic activities of these women.

### IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S HISTORY IN LOCAL HISTORY STUDY

Women are an important line of enquiry in local history studies. Finding the place of women in history is a widely researched topic, however in places like Northampton, where the local history focuses on the industrial backdrop of the boot and shoe industry, women are often overlooked for the men who ran the factories.

Meanwhile, it was the women who were organising fundraising activities for local churches, political campaigns and other philanthropic activities.

Sheila Rowbotham (1997) however argued that historians could find women if they 'looked hard enough'



### WHERE TO FIND THEM

Finding women in resources can often involve searching for their husbands, particularly in local history resources. The following show how this can prove to be valuable.

### CENSUS RETURNS

Census returns are always considered from the perspective of the head of the house. This would be predominately male (Higgs et al, 2018) and women were not given the vote (albeit still limited) until the passing of the Representation of the People Act in 1918. In fact, many women are not found on the 1911 census return as they boycotted it in the name of women's suffrage



### LOCAL LANDMARKS

it is possible to find women in a variety of place, for example on the blue plaque scheme run by English Heritage. Locally, women can also be found names on local buildings such as this one on the Northampton Free Church



### NEWSPAPERS

Women's events were often reported in local newspapers, particularly in relation to charitable giving and philanthropy. However, as with the census returns, it is often necessary to search for them in connection with their husbands, for example, Mrs Harry Manfield or Mrs. H Manfield



Mrs Harry Manfield, wife of Liberal MP Harry Manfield for Mid Northamptonshire, Manfield and Sons - Photograph from *Northampton Mercury*, 10 September 1909

### SOURCES

- Edward Higgs and Amanda Wilkinson, 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Victorian Censuses Revisited', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 81, 2018
- Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*. 2nd Edn. (1992: London, Pluto Press)
- *Northampton Mercury*, 10 September 1909