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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

HISTORY STUDENT TIMES

WOMEN OF THE WORLD



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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Letter from the Editor

Friday 8th March 2019 is International Women's Day. This edition is about celebrating the histories of women. The writers have explored a range of themes, questioning how we talk about history today, looking at forgotten women of the past and asking whether we have achieved gender equality. The adjacent photograph is from the Women's March in 2017 in Washington. It serves as a reminder that perhaps we still have a way to go.

The second issue of the year begins with a history of International Women's Day—a fitting opening piece. Dr Gina Denton very kindly offered her time for an interview about her research and views on women's history. Her interview follows.

Once again, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition for your hard work and dedication in producing these articles.

I hope you enjoy reading this second edition of the History Student Times: Women of the World.

Brogan Coulson-Haggins



Women's March on Washington

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Women%27s_March_on_Washington_\(32593123745\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Women%27s_March_on_Washington_(32593123745).jpg)

Would you like to be involved in the next edition of the History Student Times? If you have an interest for your subject and enjoy writing, you can get involved with the third issue, coming out next term.

To register your interest, email historystudenttimes@leeds.ac.uk or like our Facebook page *Leeds University History Student Times* for the latest updates.



Suffragette Procession 17th June 1911

While International Women’s Day was only recognised by the UN in 1975, the short nature of its history makes it no less remarkable. It is a history of protest, founded on overcoming the ingrained patriarchal notion that women should remain voiceless and submissive.

1909 Strikes of garment workers that had occurred in New York in 1908 were commemorated by the Socialist Party of America. The relevance of this date has been disputed due to the protest being focused on working conditions, rather than specifically on gender equality, but as working conditions are women’s issues, this date can be acknowledged as a significant beginning.

1910 17 socialist countries agreed the need for a fixed international women’s day.

1911 To honour the agreement of the year before, over 1 million people attended rallies in various countries, calling for improved rights for women.

8th March The date that we honour today emerges. After a women’s protest for ‘bread and peace’ sparked the fall of the Tsar, Russian women gaining equal voting rights to their male counterparts.

1917



Protestors march in the Woman’s March on Washington D.C. 21st January 2017

As recent commemorations of the day demonstrate, the need for active female protest did not end with suffrage.

Egypt 2011 Men chased women away from Tahrir square to prevent them from celebrating the day.

USA 2017 Protests occurred against the election of Donald Trump, known for his derogatory comments about women.

France 2018 Last year, men and women alike stopped work at 15:40 to protest the fact that women earn 24% less than men in the same job.

Sadly, as these situations remind us, there is still much to be done. Although technically it is only the Vatican which is yet to legalise female suffrage, being legally allowed to vote is often not a right reflected in reality. One heartbreaking example of this infringement upon women's suffrage was during the 2018 election in Pakistan, where many women in rural areas were intimidated into not voting. Limitation of suffrage, the prevalence of FGM and the fact that women are far more likely to suffer from extreme poverty than men, are just a few of the gender-based issues that the UN tries to address internationally today.

However, it is crucial that we in the West do not assume a moral elitism about women's rights, simply because women in this country generally have access to voting rights and employment. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) issued a report in 2016 which estimated that at least two women a week are killed in the UK by a current or ex-partner, and that one in four women in this country experience domestic abuse. Clearly women's rights are not just a historical issue, they are something that we need to re-demand every single day. Similarly, a Crime Survey in 2018 revealed that one in five women in the UK have been sexually assaulted. It is not just in terms of abuse that women within this country still suffer. A 2018 ONS report clearly demonstrates that we do still have a pay gap in this country that favours men and discriminates against women, especially women of colour.

This International Women's Day, I will be hoping for a future where it is not considered a privilege to live in a country or generation where women have an equal chance to vote, be educated and live life free from abuse and discrimination. International Women's Day is a day where we can all come together to ensure that the hopes of all women are heard. Acknowledging the intersectional nature of women's issues on this day is crucial. If you remain silent while your sisters are oppressed are you any better than their oppressors?

For too long the voices of feminism have been white, able-bodied, middle class, cisgender women. These are not attributes that should be allowed to define womanhood, or the terms of equality. International Women's Day is a day to celebrate the accomplishments of all women, to empower them and to ensure that their voices are heard. It's an opportunity to talk about LGBT rights, disabled rights, racial justice, workers' rights and so many more issues, because these are all women's issues. We need to create the platform to allow everyone to speak for themselves and to remember to take a step back and listen to those whose voices have been drowned out before. All women's struggles are different, but all are equally valid.

And yes, there is an international men's day, its 19th November.

WOMEN OF THE WORLD UNITE

Every year, International Women's Day offers the opportunity for women from across the globe to celebrate their gender and call for equality. This year's theme is "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change", intended to encourage innovation in the battle to overcome structural barriers to equality.

Rosie Plummer

Interview with Dr Gina Denton

Dr Gina Denton became a Lecturer in U.S. history at the University of Leeds in 2017, having also completed her undergraduate, masters and PhD qualifications at the university. Denton has published articles in 'The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture' and 'Journal of the Motherhood Initiative' and is currently working on a book.

Her research takes an intersectional approach to history, therefore, I was interested to find out more about her current research and her thoughts on the way we study and talk about women's history today.

Q: *What is your current research about?*

A: My current research focuses on motherhood and politics in the United States. I am particularly interested in how motherhood was politicised and women's radical activism centred around motherhood in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. My current book project is titled *Mother Power: Women's Activism and the Politicisation of Motherhood Since the Sixties*.

Concern for children and ideas around being a mother – the role of the carer, nurturer – have long been used as a basis for women's political agency. But maternalism tends to be associated with American women's reform work in the early twentieth century and seen as fairly conservative. Meanwhile, political activism in the 1960s is dominated by stories of youth and male activism. Therefore, women's activism centred around motherhood is often overlooked. It also doesn't fit with the common perceptions of Second Wave Feminism, which is predominantly seen as a critiquing the role of the mother. So I am interested in telling the story of maternal activists across the political spectrum – in peace, welfare rights, anti-busing and anti-abortion campaigns – and how these women transformed maternalism and made an important contribution to politics in 1960s America. My research is centred around taking maternal activism seriously, and this can hopefully help us understand examples of this today, for example in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Q: *Why did you become interested in women's history?*

A: My first historical interests as an undergraduate were in black history and civil rights, and I guess this was my route into looking at women's and gender history in these areas. I was interested in black feminism and how race and gender intersected in the Civil Rights movements in the U.S. I wanted to research women who are rarely been talked about in civil rights history, in particular, the low-income black single mothers who led the Welfare Rights movement. I became interested in the ways these women have been marginalised in dominant histories of the Civil Rights and feminist movements, which have been seen as separate. However, the Welfare Rights movement highlights how they interlink. Welfare rights was a gendered issue and the movement explored the relationship between poverty and gender. For example, African American women were criticised if they were dependent on state welfare and were often framed as being sexually promiscuous.

Q: Why do you think historians have taken so long to explore women's history?

A: Women's history has been studied for a long time but sometimes the early work of women to recover the stories of other women are forgotten. I became interested in the history of women's archives when working on a project with Kate Dossett titled 'Feminist Archives, Feminist Futures', which explores how the process of archiving and what gets collected is gendered, and how women's history archives have played a key role in feminist movements. However, there are institutional barriers to the study of women's history. In general the US has more women's and gender studies departments than here in the UK, for example, I spent a year researching within the Center for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Wisconsin-Madison during my PhD. But these departments haven't been without their exclusions, as many were established during Second Wave feminism when white feminists tended to focus on gender as the primary factor shaping women's lives. These days, though, they often take a more intersectional approach to women's history.

Q: Do you think there is still a way to go for the study of women's history, and if so, what direction would you like to see it go in?

A: There are lots of encouraging things happening in women's history. Here in Leeds, it's great that we have more modules focused on women and gender than there used to be, as well as on masculinities. There is also a vibrant Women, Gender & Sexuality research cluster exploring these ideas led by postgraduate students. These changes are both staff and student led. It's encouraging to see students being critical of the 'token women's week' in some modules and asking for more modules exploring feminist history. I think this is part of wider movements, in the University and nationally, of students questioning what they are taught, demonstrated by the 'Why is My Curriculum White?' campaign. However, there is ongoing resistance – recent Royal Historical Society reports into race and gender found that there is a lack of diversity in the study and research of history and there are sadly gendered and racial barriers to advancement.

I would like to see the study of history continue to expand on its intersectional approach, especially as some early women's history focused on gender in isolation. In my research, I am also interested in recovering the histories of conservative women in the anti-feminist, anti-abortion and anti-busing movements. Often these women were belittled or seen as suffering from a 'false consciousness', and not given the same political credit as conservative men, so there is a sexism in the way history has dismissed or ridiculed them. Their stories don't fit the common female narratives of victimhood or celebration, but I think it's important that women's history recognises that women are complex political actors and affords them the same critical attention long given to men.

Brogan Coulson-Haggins

ANNE NEVILLE: RICHARD III'S FORGOTTEN QUEEN

Matthew Hough

Despite being one of England's shortest-reigning medieval monarchs, King Richard III has been the subject of countless historical studies. With the relatively recent trend towards reassessing his reign and character, as well as the discovery of his remains in 2012, this number will only continue to grow. However, the same cannot be said for his queen, Anne Neville, who, in comparison, has received little scholarly attention. As such, Anne is known to many only as a character in the works of William Shakespeare, who, like many of the historical figures featuring in his plays, bears little resemblance to the woman herself.

Anne was the second daughter of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, England's most powerful magnate, and was briefly married to Edward of Westminster, son of Henry VI, before marrying Richard. Therefore, she was at different times Princess of Wales, Duchess of Gloucester, and Queen of England, all before her death in 1485 at the age of twenty-eight. As such, it is surprising that so little scholarly attention has been dedicated to her.

One reason that Anne is so under-studied is the lack of contemporary documents or chronicles relating to her. Unlike subsequent queens she did not have her portrait painted, and unlike Margaret of Anjou or Elizabeth

Woodville, the consorts of Henry VI and Edward IV, she did not play a significant role in politics. The shortness of her reign as queen, lasting just under two years, partially accounts for this, but the resulting mystery has led to debates developing around particular areas of Anne's life, such as her marriage to Richard III.

In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Anne is first seen mourning for the deaths of her father-in-law, Henry VI, and for her late husband, Edward of Westminster. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, whom Shakespeare casts as the killer of

“One reason that Anne is so under-studied is the lack of contemporary documents or chronicles relating to her. Unlike subsequent queens she did not have her portrait painted.”

both men, then proceeds to woo her, and in a tragic, and improbable turn of events, she falls for the villainous future king, who later murders her once she is no longer of use to him. This characterisation of Anne as a victim of Richard's evil is Shakespeare's invention, having little basis

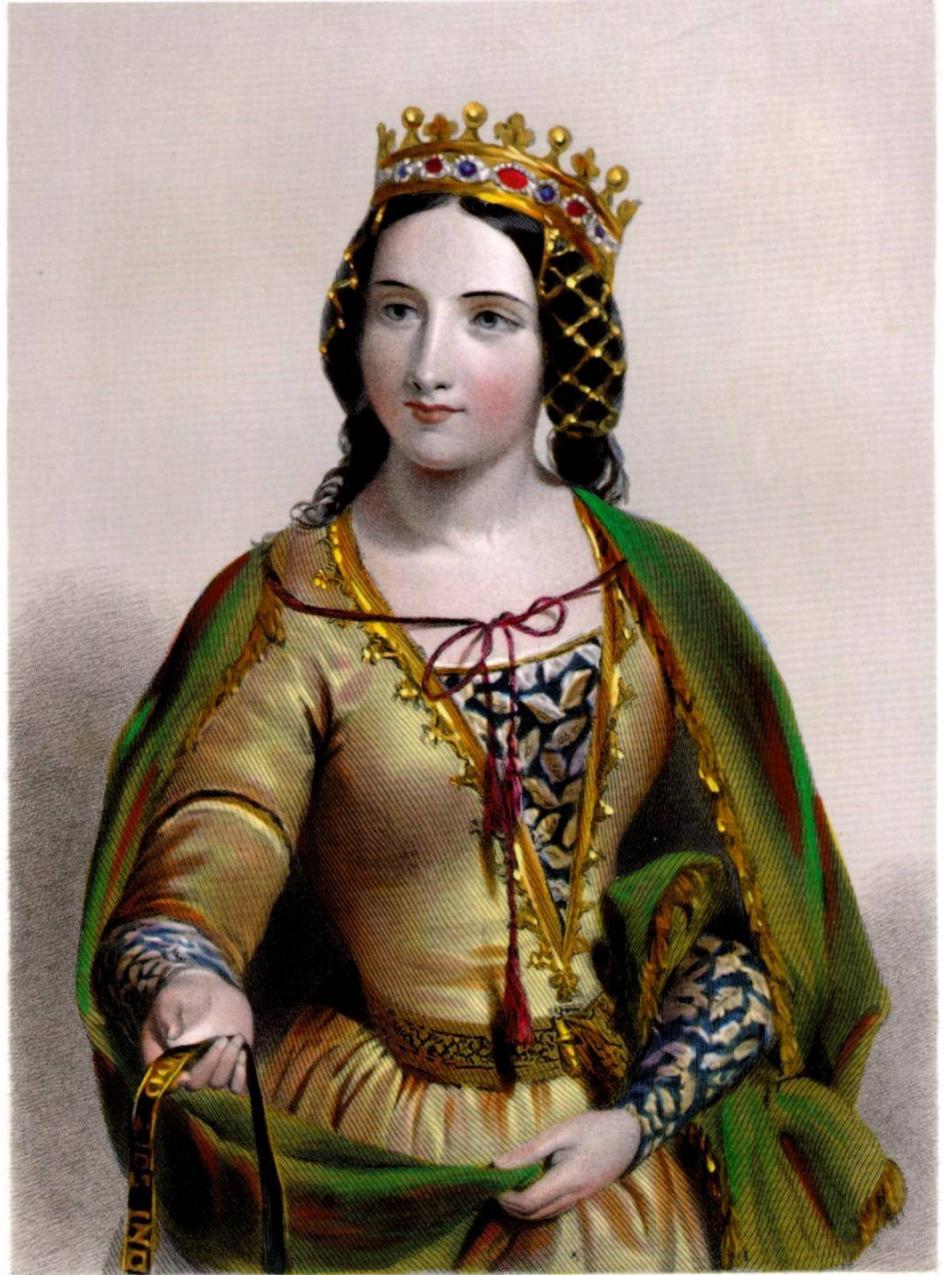
in contemporary chronicles. An examination of Anne's relationship with Richard, despite the limited evidence, presents an entirely different picture.

In reality, Anne and Richard had known each other from childhood. During the 1460s he had spent several years at Middleham Castle, one of Anne's father's properties, while Anne was living there. As such, some historians have suggested that Anne's marriage to Richard in 1472 was the result of a love match, which while not unknown, were uncommon among the higher English nobil-

ity in the late middle-ages. Anne and Richard's shared religious interests and the shared grief they expressed for the death of their only child, Prince Edward of Middleham, which, according to contemporary chronicles, left them on the verge of madness, have been cited as evidence for this line of argument. However, Anne's high status and her family's wealth would have undoubtedly provided a great incentive for a prospective husband, and to many historians, this is evidence enough to dismiss the idea that her marriage to Richard was a love match.

Richard's older brother, George, Duke of Clarence, was married to Anne's older sister, Isabel. A section of the Crowland Chronicle, dating from 1486, states that Clarence unsuccessfully attempted to prevent Richard from marrying Anne by hiding her from him, disguising her as a kitchen maid, so that he would not have to share his wife's inheritance with his brother. This story may not be entirely true (although it is accepted by some historians), but it certainly suggests that inheritance was key to Anne's match with Richard. However, it does not rule out that Richard may have already sought to marry her, and thus Anne's marriage to the future king may well have been for love, as well as conventional reasons.

Shakespeare's suggestion that Anne was murdered is also largely baseless, being mentioned only in the Rous Roll, a contemporary history that was later edited to portray Richard in a more negative light. Nonetheless, numerous historians have argued that Richard's desire to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York, demonstrates that he intended to divorce Anne. While this may well have been the case, Anne had become ill with tuberculosis by 1485, and following her son's death in 1484, Richard was without an heir. Thus, it is entirely plausible that he was preparing for



Artists impression of Anne Neville, 2012

the eventuality of her death, rather than merely discarding her for a younger wife.

Despite our limited knowledge of Anne's short but eventful life, we can still conclude that it was hugely different to that portrayed by Shakespeare, and while she may be only known today as Richard III's wife, the scarcity of contemporary sources about her serves only to make her a more fascinating figure in her own right.



BARONESS BACON AND YORKSHIRE'S CRUSADE TO BLUE PLAQUE PARITY

Toni Stephenson

The most common and recognisable historical monument in the UK is the traditional blue plaque marking the home or office of figures whose achievements have contributed to society, culture, science or politics. As history enthusiasts there is little doubt that we have all stopped in our tracks to read these plaques to find out about the person who lived or worked there, or which iconic documents were written within those walls. London has almost a thousand, on what seems like every street corner. However, there is only a 13% chance that a blue plaque you spot anywhere in the UK, will be a monu-

ment to the achievements of a woman.

Journalists have put this under increasing scrutiny in the last decade as movements have arisen to rectify this. This disproportionate statistic may not come as a surprise; we are all aware of the dominance of men throughout history, with legislative changes for gender equality, such as the right to vote and the right to equal pay, only having occurred in the last century. Although women have been creating legacies worth celebrating all throughout history, their stories tend to be hidden, leaving their achievements at risk of being left

behind and forgotten about. However, women have not only been contributing to society since this legislation and the UK's history of patriarchal dominance has led to the risk of women's achievements being left behind and forgotten about.

The 'Forgotten Women of Wakefield', a West Yorkshire project parented by Dream Time Creative, are trying to prevent this from happening within their city by researching the achievements of local women and fundraising to put up blue plaques in their honour. The aim is to achieve parity with men by 2028. Their first plaque was unveiled on International Women's Day 2018 in Normanton, the home of Yorkshire's first female MP, Alice Bacon.

Born in Normanton, West Yorkshire in 1909, Bacon's father was a coalminer, councillor and union representative. During her childhood she would aid those who needed assistance, filling out government forms. She joined the Labour Party and gave her first political speech at sixteen years old about the working conditions of miners. It was Labour's historic 1945 victory when Bacon took the Leeds North East constituency from a Conservative representative, becoming the first ever woman elected to hold a Yorkshire seat in the House of Commons. As MP, she became a crucial advocate of the Private Members' bills legalising abortion, homosexuality and abolishing the death penalty. Her work led her to her being bestowed the title Baroness of the City of Leeds and of Normanton, in 1970. Bacon's plaque can now be seen on Normanton Town Hall and a subsequent plaque was recently erected on the Leeds Corn Exchange



Alice Bacon 1945

in January this year to celebrate her contributions to her constituency.

As a working class woman born before women had the right to vote, crusading her way into the Houses of Parliament and, therefore, well deserving of a blue plaque, it may seem Alice Bacon's achievements could be a rarity in history. However, the idea that historically women have contributed less to society than men, seemingly reflected by the blue plaque disparity, is damaging. This is not only because it is misleading but also because it perpetuates a patriarchal domination which places limitations on women today.

Sarah Cobham, the brain behind the Forgotten Women of Wakefield initiative, highlighted an example of how women's achievements are often hidden in history. When researching the achievements of a woman in a newspaper, they will often be referred to by the name of their husband. For instance, Millicent Fawcett giving a speech on Votes for Women might have been reported in a newspaper as, "Mrs Henry Fawcett". This is clear evidence of women not receiving full credit for their achievements and demonstrates how these achievements can be left behind and later overlooked.

When such achievements by women exist, the gender disparity in blue plaques is disheartening. It is damaging to our image of history and our image of the capacity of women to achieve. This is why the 'Forgotten Women of Wakefield' project not only researches women and raises money for blue plaques, but also places importance on community engagement, aiming to embolden women and their voices. This includes visiting schools, holding creative workshops, networking, archiving, involvement in art walks, having pop-up broadsheets and ensuring their project is widely seen. This even extends to using vacant shop windows to display some of the blue plaques that the team are working on.

Through helping women get recognition for their historic achievements, projects such as the 'Forgotten Women of Wakefield' are not rewriting history. Instead, they are enhancing it, changing the way society perceives women by finding their voices from the past and emboldening our voices in the present to support the next generation of female scientists, writers and politicians who want to contribute to society. That is why, as historians and members of society, we should all be behind blue plaque parity.



Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway - Maryland, USA

HARRIET TUBMAN

Honouring a Humanitarian Hero

Hannah Bullock

“I felt it pertinent to highlight the remarkable bravery and incredible achievements of Tubman for International Women’s Day 2019 “

In 2016, Obama’s Treasury Secretary, Jack Lew, announced that Harriet Tubman would become the first black woman ever to grace American paper currency, and the first woman to do so in over a century. However, in a predictable fashion, the Trump administration has announced that it will not commit to putting Tubman on the \$20 bill. As such, I felt it pertinent to high-

light the remarkable bravery and incredible achievements of Tubman for International Women’s Day 2019 and argue that she should take her place on the \$20 bill.

Born a slave in Maryland in 1820, Tubman escaped to Philadelphia in 1849, a state where slavery was illegal. She recalled

from her initial months of emancipation that she was 'a stranger in a strange land' and that she longed for her family and friends to enjoy freedom alongside her. In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed which imposed heavy punishment upon abetting escape and forced law enforcement officials to assist in the capture of escaped slaves - in both free and slave states. However, her desire to be reunited with family exceeded this danger as she led her niece and niece's children to Philadelphia in December of the same year.

Over the following decade, Tubman gained a name for herself as the most famous conductor on the underground railroad, a series of secret safe houses and trails on which she personally led at least 70 slaves to freedom. She also instructed a similar number on how to escape alone. From drugging babies to stifle their cries, to working in the harshest depths of winter, her methods ensured that she 'never ran [her] train off the track' and that she 'never lost a passenger'. With a \$40,000 bounty on her head, this was an unbelievably brave, courageous and selfless achievement to say the least. With the onset of the American Civil War in 1861, Tubman acted as a nurse, chef and spy assisting fugitive slaves. She later became the head of an espionage and scout network for the Union Army. Her total rescue figures have been estimated at anywhere between three and five hundred.

Following the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, Tubman turned her attention to the remaining inequality in American society; female suffrage. From her position amongst the abolitionist community Tubman befriended Susan B. Anthony, who paved the way for the Women's Rights movement. Tubman was an ardent supporter and toured with Anthony, giving inspirational speeches on her time as 'Moses', or chief conductor, despite her illiteracy. The end of her life was dedicated to helping impoverished former slaves and the elderly and she personally built the Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent

Colored People in 1908 - a true champion for civil rights and social justice until the very end.

Although she died 13th March 1913, her story lives on. The 2017 Pulitzer Prize was awarded to Colson Whitehead for his book *Underground Railroad*. Although not based on fact, it is testament to those who worked the railroad of pre-emancipation America and provides a gripping tale of the dangers that real people, such as Tubman, faced. Tubman only saw reward for her efforts and military contributions three decades after the War. She was paid a mere \$20 per month for her service. Therefore, it is time that her awe-inspiring journey be given the recognition it deserves through commemoration on American banknotes, given her remarkable contribution to black, women's and American history.



Harriet Tubman—Photograph by H. B. Linsley

WERE ATTEMPTS BY THE BRITISH TO STOP SATI IN INDIA DUE TO GENUINE CONCERNS FOR WOMEN?

Rebecca Illidge

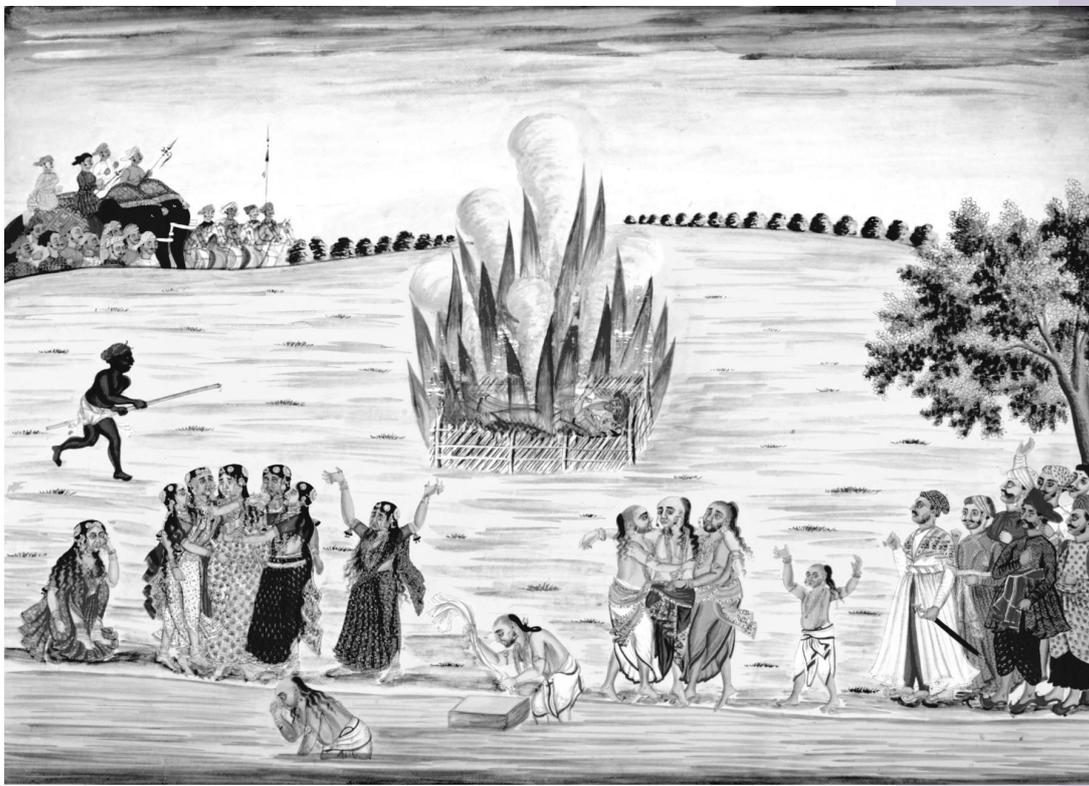


Coat of Arms East India Company

“There was little effort on the part of British colonialists to understand the reasons why women may commit Sati. Instead they portrayed Indian women as helpless casualties of the brutality of their religion and male peers, to justify British colonial presence in the region. “

The East India Company was a British trading company which came to control large areas of India by the late 18th Century. Whilst in India, British officials interfered in many areas of Indian and Hindu ways of life, including the practice of Sati. Sati involves a widow taking her own life after the death of her husband, and was outlawed in many regions by the East India Company in 1829. On the surface, this may understandably be seen as a positive change to advance the status of women, yet further exploration of the topic leads one to question this.

There was little effort on the part of British colonialists to understand the reasons why women may commit Sati. Instead they portrayed Indian women as helpless casualties of the brutality of their religion and male peers, to justify British colonial presence in the region. They were almost always passive victims, either physically coerced, intoxicated, or overcome by fanaticism; they were never free nor rational agents. Indian women, especially widows in this case, were eternal victims to the vicarious whims and violent abuses of their male relatives from cradle to grave. British officials capitalised on this; Sati could be utilised in nineteenth century colonial justifications of the need to civilise India. The practice could be used to spin narratives of Hindu cultural ‘otherness’ and Indian backwardness and barbarism, further confirming the need for British rule in India. As Spivak writes, in the minds of colonisers ‘white men are saving brown women from brown men’. Furthermore, East India Company officials issued declarations that Sati was a Hindu



Depiction of the practice of Sati, circa 1800

practice, rather than a secular Indian one. By doing so, it turned a women's issue into a religious one and the aim to help widows was lost. Consequently, one must question whether attempts to forbid Sati were actually to condemn Hindu and Indian ways of life and present British-Christian traditions as superior.

Furthermore, there was a lack of communication with Indian women when deciding upon laws which dealt with the practice. As previously stated, there was no exploration by colonial officials of why Sati was committed; it was asserted in Hindu law that if a widow was not able to join her husband on the funeral pyre, that she was to strictly live a humble and chaste life with no possibility of remarriage. Furthermore, she would have no economic support. What kind of life would this constitute? Many women, though not physically coerced by family members, felt pressured into joining her husband on the pyre rather than live this lifestyle. Surely if the aim was to help women, British officials should have attempted to resolve this first? Colonial aid to Indian women could have looked like centres or communities for widows, providing shelter and food to women with no economic support. It also could have attempted to integrate women into the workforce. This kind of support would be constituted as helpful to women and would have gone a long way in preventing Sati, yet the direct outlaw of the practice did little to dissuade women to commit it.

In addition to this, the women themselves were not the primary subject of the debate; Jeanette Herman argues that 'women remain a minor theme. Although it is ostensibly the question of whether they should live or die ... the materiality of their burning bodies and the anguish of their pain are remarkably absent from its purview'. How could this mission to outlaw Sati be about helping women when it was not what many of them wanted, nor were they included in discussion?

Thus, I argue not for the practice of Sati, but that colonial discussion of the practice should have first and foremost been centred around and included the opinions of Indian women.

The actions of the British in India in attempting to put an end to the practice raise wider questions about Western feminism today. British male officials saw Sati as oppressive to women and implemented measures to prevent this in good faith, yet they did not think to consult those who the practice affected. The feminist movement of today can similarly be criticised for this; many Western feminists have protested against the Muslim veil in the 21st Century as they view it as oppressive, yet they have not consulted the views of women who wear them, for whom feminism and liberation does not encompass rejecting their religious identity. We, therefore, still have much to learn from our colonial past.

FEMALE SYMBOLS & THEIR HISTORIES

Melissa Harvey

Throughout the Western world, women (and men) have been coded with symbols and imagery that denote the state of being female or femininity. Need the bathroom? Look for the symbol of the stick person wearing a triangular dress. Buying some baby clothes for a young female relative? You can bet that the majority of clothes for girls will be pink or a similar hue. But where do these symbols come from and what is the meaning behind them? How have they manifested themselves into our everyday lives? And what are some other, perhaps lesser-known symbols of femininity found elsewhere in the world?

The Moon

The moon has long been a symbol of femininity and feminine energy. In astrology, the Moon represents your emotional needs (emotions are also associated with women) and the experiences of mothers and mothering. The representation of the moon as 'female' – and likewise the Sun as 'male' – can be traced back to Greco-Roman mythology, with the gods Helios/Sol and Selene/Luna representing the sun and moon, respectively. There are logical reasons behind the labelling of the Moon as a feminine deity, as both the Moon and women share cycles – the English word 'month' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'monath', akin to 'mona' or 'moon.' Moreover, the Moon acts as a mirror, reflecting the Sun's light back to us. The Sun was seen as a symbol of masculine energy and the Moon 'reflected' this energy, a process which, it could be argued, reflects women's positions as largely subordinate to men. However, this is not universally the case, traditional Turkic mythology depicted the Sun as a goddess (Gün Ana) and the Moon as a god (Ay Dede), for example.



Image dated 1578 in which the marriage of the Sun (male) and the Moon (female) is represented

The Colour Pink

In the Western world, the colour pink is used widely to denote women, girls and femininity, in opposition to blue, which is associated with men, boys and masculinity. The history of this tradition, however, has not always been so clear-cut. In 19th century England baby boys often wore pink because pink is a variant of the colour red, which was the colour of English military uniform. Boys were simply small men, so it was seen as fitting that they wore the colour of a diluted red. Girls, on the other hand, wore blue. The colour blue for girls has deeper connotations around the world; for example, the Yoruba (ethnic group of

southwestern and north-central Nigeria) deity Yemoja, protector of women, is often depicted as wearing blue and is associated with water. Largely due to consumer marketing, the reversal of these colours as gender signifiers in the West began to occur around the 1940s, with the colour pink increasingly becoming associated with women in the 1950s, particularly in America. However, prior to this, both boys and girls wore pink in more or less equal measure around Europe and the United States, depending on local cultures and customs.

Venus Symbol

This symbol refers to either the biological female sex or the female gender, and is a widely recognised symbol of femininity. The glyph is taken from the astrological symbol for the planet Venus, which was associated with its corresponding Roman goddess, Venus, the goddess of love, beauty, desire and sexuality. The use of the symbol to represent the female sex dates back to the 1750s, with the added use of the symbol to represent women and the female gender specifically in the

20th century. The symbol (a circle with a cross) references Venus' hand mirror, although it was originally drawn as a circle with a line beneath it, and the Christian cross was added in the early modern period. The Venus symbol was a commonly used by second wave feminists in protest signs and publications, sometimes drawn with a raised fist in the middle of the circle. It continues to be used today in popular culture to denote feminism or issues relating to gender equality.

Earth and Nature

In the Western world, both earth and nature commonly find themselves represented in the female form. As a concept, Mother Nature, or Mother Earth, can be traced back to the Greco-Roman period, in which Mother Nature was a deity that personified the life-giving, nurturing aspects of the world around us as a mother. Given that women's roles throughout history have consistently been defined in terms of their ability to bear children, it is hardly surprising that the idea of nature should be considered inherently 'feminine'. Maybe not the

most academic of references, but the earthly goddess who controls the natural world in the Disney film Moana comes to mind here! There are similar 'Mother Earth' figures found within the cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas; for example, in Inca mythology, Mama Pacha or Pachamama is a fertility goddess whose name is usually interpreted as 'Mother Earth.'

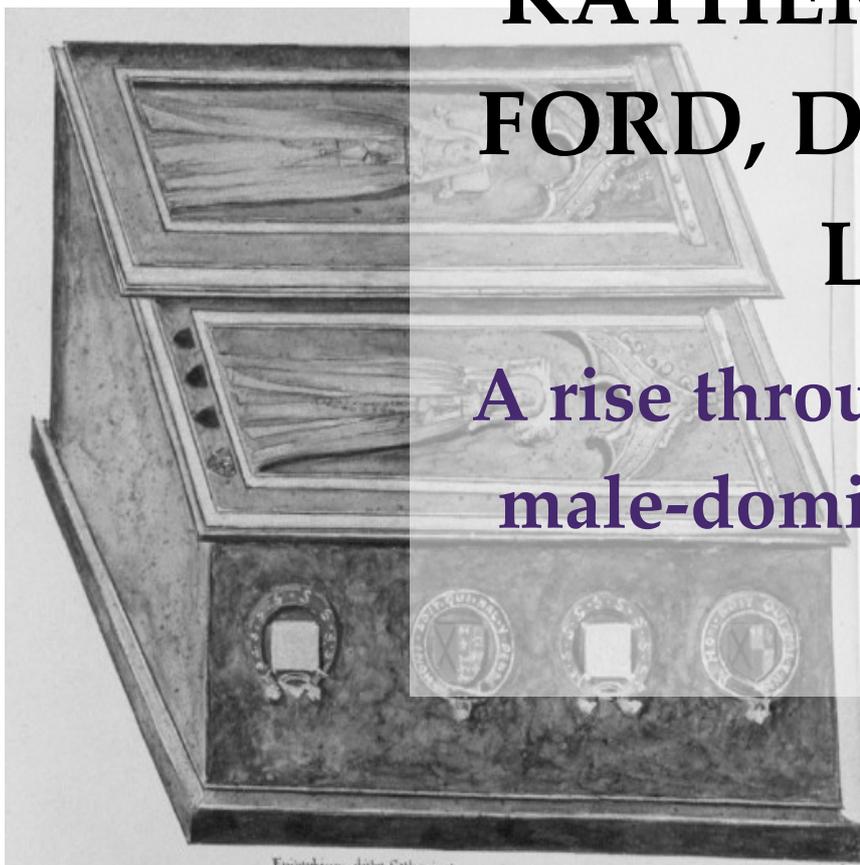


KATHERINE SWYN- FORD, DUCHESS OF LANCASTER

A rise through the ranks of
male-dominated medieval
English society

Lauren Hunter

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KTombDugdale67.jpg>



1640 drawing of Swynford and her daughter's tomb

Katherine Swynford (c.1350-1403) led a remarkable life considering the era in which she lived. She lived through several historically significant events and was a contemporary of Chaucer. Furthermore, her biography is entangled with those of other major figures of fourteenth-century England. However, Katherine ascended the social ladder by both socially acceptable methods and more unorthodox ones. Born into obscurity, Katherine first served in the royal household, then began an illicit relationship with a powerful Duke. Despite being vilified for her status as a 'concubine', she was later able to legitimise the position of both herself and her children through marriage to this same Duke. Their relationship has been interpreted as one of the great love stories of the middle ages. For example, the 1954 novel *Katherine*, by American author Anya Seton, has never been out of print since its publication. Just how was this humbly born woman able to climb the social ladder and find happiness in the male-dominated society of medieval England?

The daughter of a knight, Katherine was born around 1350 and sent to England to be educated in the household of Queen Philli-

pa, wife of King Edward III. She later entered the household of the king's brother John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. John's wife Blanche was reputedly a very beautiful woman; it is said that Blanche is the subject of Chaucer's poem *The Book of the Duchess* (c.1370). Before 1365, Katherine married Hugh Swynford, a soldier from an established, though impoverished, Lincolnshire family. They moved to Kettlethorpe Manor, where some fourteenth-century remains can still be seen today. Katherine and Hugh had at least two daughters and a son, and Katherine divided her time between her marital home and the ducal court in which she served.

However, tragedy struck in 1368 when Duchess Blanche died. Duke John needed a new bride, and chose the Spanish Princess Constance of Castile in the hope of gaining her territory in northern Spain. Furthermore, tragedy struck Katherine in 1371 when her husband Hugh died whilst on campaign in Aquitaine. Katherine was now a widow aged 21 and needed protection. She was able, for the second time, to secure employment for herself in Duke John's household, this time as a female companion to his new wife Constance. Meanwhile, John was becoming un-

popular due to his vast wealth, and the zeal with which he pursued his wife's claims to territory in Spain.

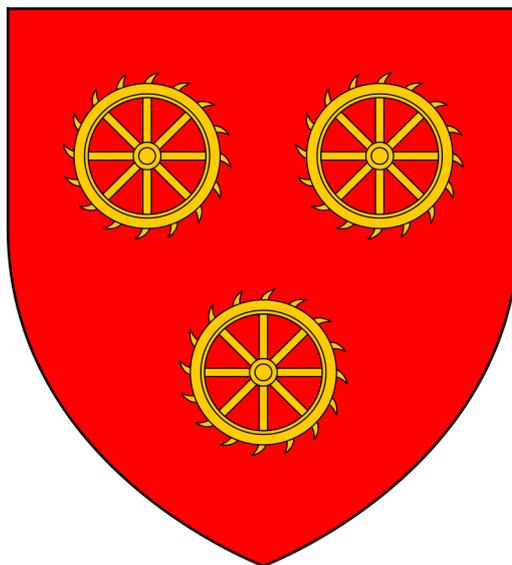
Katherine and John became lovers during this second spell of employment, and a son, John Beaufort, was born to them around 1372. Historian Alison Weir asserts that John and Katherine found happiness together because of their shared history and bereavement, and as a result of John's unhappy marriage to Constance. However, it is easy to see why a liaison with John was advantageous to Katherine: he was the most powerful man in England after the king. Katherine was made a permanent member of John's household and appointed governess to his daughters. She was able to keep her manor of Kettlethorpe, but now lived in the itinerant ducal household, travelling between such castles as Kenilworth in Warwickshire, and the Savoy Palace in London. Politically, John was becoming more unpopular than ever. England's activities during the ongoing Hundred Years' war were going badly, and people believed that John had designs upon the throne. People were also unhappy at increasing taxes. However, Katherine's fortune was rising: for example, sources show her gaining two manors in 1377 after the birth of their third child.

In 1377 King Edward died and Richard II became king. At first, people were hopeful of a new 'golden era', but this soon dissipated. John began to appear in public with his mistress, which caused moral outrage. In addition, new taxes were imposed, together with wage and price controls, and the result of these was the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. During the violence, John's Savoy Palace was destroyed by an angry mob. The ensuing turmoil had a profound impact upon Katherine's status. The Duke, fearing the wrath of God, and in repentance for his previous mode of living, repudiated her. John publicly declared his rejection of Katherine as the cause of his corrupt lifestyle, portraying her as a 'she-devil and enchantress', thus transforming her into a villain and distancing himself from his own culpability. However, the sources problematise such an interpretation because they were written by anonymous monastic chroniclers, and, therefore, can be said to offer the views of the church. As the most powerful man in the kingdom, John clearly made his own decisions

regarding his lifestyle.

Nevertheless, life was now much different for Katherine. After nine years of living in the ducal household she lost her position at court. However, sources show that John still supported her financially, no doubt as a result of their four illegitimate children. She moved into a large property in Lincoln. Furthermore, a 1382 quitclaim document shows John permanently granting to Katherine all the properties he had previously bestowed upon her. Therefore, although their relationship was over, Katherine was a wealthy woman.

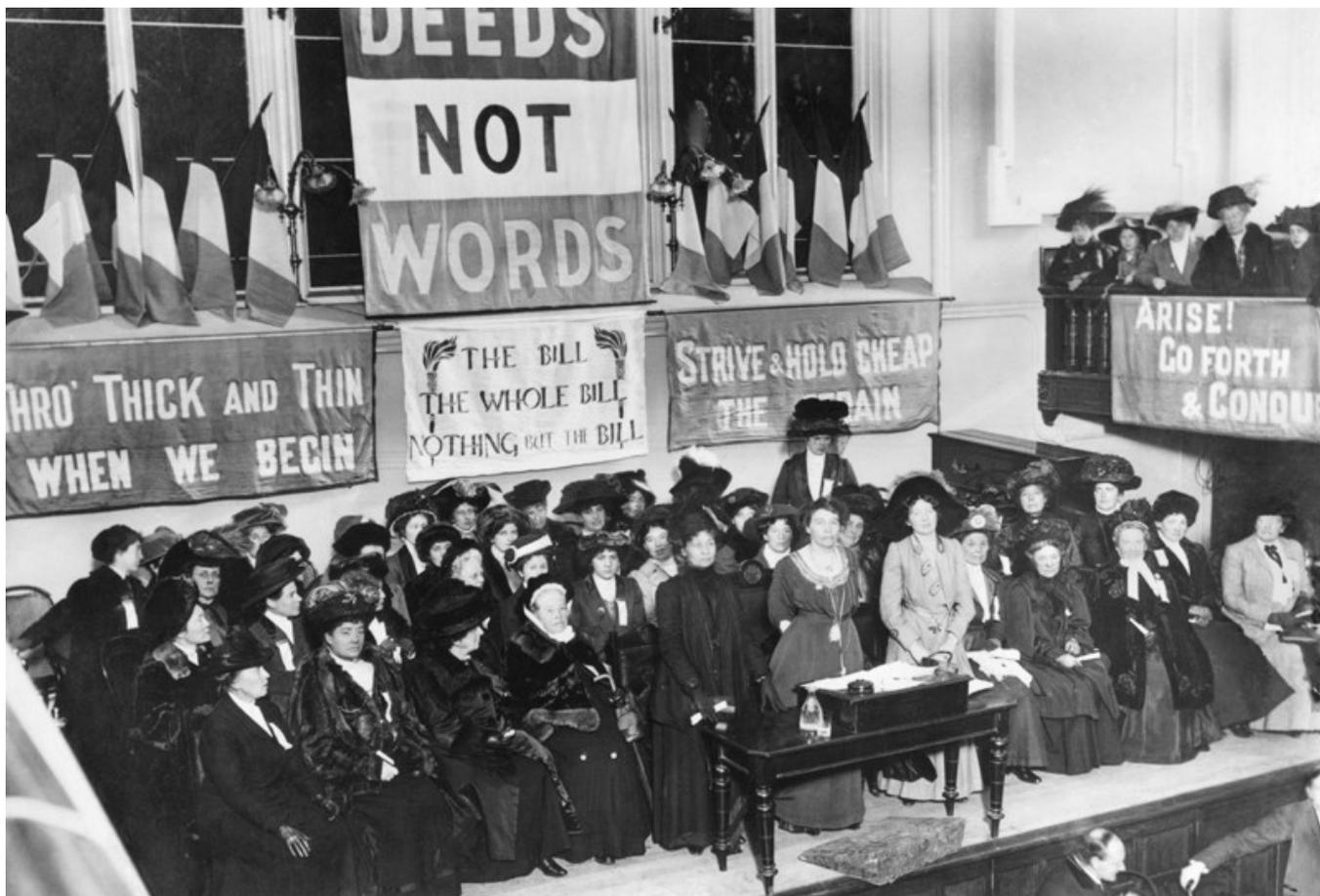
In 1394, John's second wife, the Spanish Princess Constance, died. John was now free and made up his mind to marry Katherine.



Coat of Arms of Katherine Swynford

However, as he was the godfather of Katherine's son from her first marriage, he had to make an application to Pope Boniface IX. The Pope acceded to this request, and they were married in January 1396. This represented a huge leap in social status for Katherine: she was now Duchess of Lancaster, the most prominent woman in England. It was also a rare achievement for a royal mistress to become the wife of their lover. Despite a certain amount of scorn poured upon the Duke for having flouted social convention and married his mistress, the couple were happy together and were able to legitimise their children by application to the Pope. This caused problems during the ensuing centuries as rival claimants did battle in the Wars of the Roses, but effectively set the seal of approval upon Katherine and John's long relationship.

Duke John of Lancaster died in February 1399, making Katherine a wealthy dowager. Although she was very lucky, Katherine's story demonstrates that it was possible for a knight's daughter to rise through the ranks of society in fourteenth-century England. Despite a period of estrangement and vilification, Katherine remained loyal to John throughout turbulent times, construed a happy ending to their story and greatly increased the social status of her children, who were transported from illegitimacy into noble society. No wonder their tale has become one of the great 'love stories' of the middle ages!



A suffragette meeting in Caxton Hall, Manchester, England circa 1908

LEGISLATION ON THE FEMALE BODY: ARE WE THERE YET?

Fiona Linnard

When women over 30 gained the vote in the 1918 Representation of the People Act, the efforts of a forceful rights movement appeared to come to fruition. A decade later, this age was lowered to 21 to match the requirements set for men. It would seem, then, that the strive for sexual equality had seen a breakthrough, and the twentieth- and twenty-first-century had seen the levelling of the social

playing field. Undeniably, legislation has come a long way. But how many millennials would be shocked if told that before 1982, a woman could be refused a drink at a pub based solely on their gender? Over a hundred years ago, the grandest, most symbolic legislation had been passed, namely, political suffrage. Yet, what about the

laws passed on the most basic lived experience – her body?

Legislating on a woman's body has been entrenched into British law for centuries. The Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s allowed police officers to arrest anyone they thought could be a prostitute, then to subject them to invasive procedures testing for venereal disease. On large, this affected woman's public presence: even if she was an innocent passer-by, the subjectivity of arrests gave the police disturbing power. A century later, the House of Commons still legislated on the intricacies of the female body, and in 1967, it legalised abortion. Just 28 years ago, it was made illegal for a wife to be raped by her husband. Most recently, in January 2019, the House of Lords passed a law against 'upskirting', the phenomenon whereby non-consensual photos are taken of a person's genitals with a camera faced up a person's clothing.

Women's bodies are thus still discursive political platforms, whether in a positive or negative light. But who is legislating on women's bodies? According to a report by the House of Commons Library, a record number of women were

elected to Parliament in the 2017 general election, constituting 31% of all MPs. This means, then, the majority of the people passing seminal laws on the female body are not female themselves. Moreover, just 52 MPs are non-white, while there are 'at least' 47 LGBTQ*. This proposes a wider problem for society: even those few women who are in the House of Commons are reflective of only a small selection of lived experience in Britain today.

The problem only proliferates when considered in the international context. A legislative trend across the United States is seeing a retraction of abortion rights previously granted. The large-scale aspect is symptomatic of a lingering, hegemonic impulse, that arguably values power above all else.

Of course, there is a real danger in discussing legislation on the female body in isolation. The potential for reducing it to a site merely of political discourse risks dehumanising the person in question. But examination of legislation raises pivotal questions on how women are discussed, who is making the decisions, and arguably deeper, more worrying prejudices ingrained into the national psyche.



Palace of Westminster

HELLO FROM HISTSOC

“Elections for next years is coming up very quickly! We will be releasing a timetable of deadlines for manifestos, voting and the lot very soon.”

Welcome back historians!

Hope all your exams and deadlines in January went well, and your new semester has been off to a great start!

Firstly, we would like to thank everyone who came along to our socials last semester – the Christmas Ball was absolutely amazing and big thanks to our Ball Sec, Georgia, for organising such an incredible night for us all. Also, a big thanks to those who turned up to our second GIAG, Histsoc does Bingo – it was great to see lots of you there and hope the lucky winners enjoyed your prizes!

Coming up very soon we have our trip to Krakow! Becca, our Trip Sec, has sent you all an email asking for some details so please get them to her as soon as possible – keep an eye out for an article on the History Student Times website about Histsoc’s recommendations for Krakow and some of our top tips to ensure an amazing time!

Unfortunately, the time is drawing to a close for this committee and elections for next years is coming up very quickly! We will be releasing a timetable of deadlines for manifestos, voting and the lot very soon. If you are interested in being a part of committee next year and have any questions, feel free to send LUU Histsoc a message on Facebook or the current committee member for the role you’re interested in.

As always, we have lots of fun socials coming up for you including a Secret Social (more on that soon), an Otley Run and, of course, a Deadline Day social!

Remember to keep checking our Facebook page for all Histsoc news and we will see you all at our next social soon.

Lots of Histsoc love,

Claire (Academic Sec)





HISTORY STUDENT TIMES

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