

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Glasgow
Unit of Assessment: D30 – History
Title of case study: Supporting and advancing the role and understanding of women in Scottish history and society
1. Summary of the impact

The research of historians in the Centre for Gender History at the University of Glasgow (UoG) informs a range of public engagement activities with a diverse body of public and non-profit organisations, providing historically-based analysis to help to shape policy, practice and knowledge-gathering across these sectors, especially in Scotland. UoG researchers have worked closely with the Glasgow Women's Library supporting and delivering through workshops and other profile-raising activities across Scotland a ground-breaking 'memorial mapping' project to mark commemorations of women who made a significant contribution to society. The 'map' now contains references to over 300 women and has been covered extensively in the media and by tourism websites and our advice has informed participatory projects by agencies including the Girl Guides and Dumfries & Galloway Council.

2. Underpinning research

UoG's Centre for Gender History assembles amongst the largest number of historians of gender in any UK university. The collective aim of the research carried out at the Centre is to examine the different narratives created as 'histories' using gender as a category of analysis. Research at the Centre is also intended to improve the body of women's history, by identifying and researching key women who may have been overlooked by conventional historians and by reassessing older, more sweeping histories which fail to integrate women's experiences and gender relations into overarching interpretations of change. The Centre was established in 2008 and the underpinning research has been conducted by Lynn Abrams, Eleanor Gordon and Annmarie Hughes. Abrams joined UoG in 1995, became Professor of Gender History in 2003 and Professor of Modern History in 2013; having previously been a lecturer and senior lecturer at UoG, Gordon was appointed Professor of Social and Gender History in 2004; and, Hughes was appointed to a Lectureship in Social History in 2007.

The team's research has sought to:

- (i) make a substantive contribution to public understanding of the position and experience of women in Scottish society since c.1700;
- (ii) contribute to a rethinking or realignment of the narrative of modern Scottish history by adding women to the narrative and by applying theories of gender to traditional interpretive frameworks; and,
- (iii) inform policy and practice in contemporary gender issues in Scottish society particularly in respect of the family and violence by applying an historical perspective.

The research of the Centre has grown from work previously achieved by researchers at UoG. In 1998 Abrams and Gordon initiated a research project undertaken under the auspices of Women's History Scotland, an independent organisation that exists to promote research into women's and gender history in Scotland. The project aimed to insert women into public understandings of Scotland's past and to stretch the boundaries of what constituted the mainstream narratives of Scottish history – see [womenshistoryscotland.org]. Abrams remains the Convenor of Women's History Scotland, which links women's and gender historians in academia with independent scholars, women's groups and campaigning organisations by means of academic and more broad-based publications and projects which seek to bring about knowledge exchange and community benefit.

Both Abrams and Gordon made substantive contributions – with Gordon as an advisory editor and contributor, and Abrams as contributor – to *the Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005) – a compendium of more than 800 women who have made a

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significant contribution to Scottish history. Both were editors of and contributing authors to *Gender in Scottish History since 1700* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005) which, by applying gender as a category of analysis, substantively questioned and re-assessed some of the long-standing myths of Scottish history (the 'democratic intellect', a 'civilising society'). The collection challenged narratives of Scottish national identity, reconfigured the political sphere, stretched our understanding of what constitutes the religious and redefined the family.

Research has also focused on interrogating the workings of gender in Scottish society in the past, specifically within the family and amongst men in a variety of contexts. Research by Gordon and Abrams has reconceptualised understandings of manhood in modern Scottish society, critiquing the stereotypical image of the Scottish 'hard man' by focusing on fatherhood in working and middle class families. Hughes and Abrams have also sought to understand and contextualise the place of violence amongst men in the public sphere and between men and women within the domestic context, engaging with dominant perceptions of Scottish masculinity as violent and placing interpersonal violence in a framework which enables us to understand better the precise contexts that both facilitated and disciplined violence.

3. References to the research

1. L Abrams, E Gordon, D Simonton and E J Yeo, eds, *Gender in Scottish History since 1700* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006). ISBN 9780748617616. Edited book includes: Abrams, 'Introduction: Gendering the Agenda'; Breitenbach and Abrams, 'Gender and Scottish Identity'; Gordon, 'The Family'. [Submitted to RAE2008.] [Available from HEI]
2. L Abrams, "'There was Nobody like my Daddy": Fathers, the Family and the Marginalisation of Men in Modern Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* LXXVIII:2 (1999), pp. 219-42. [Available from HEI]
3. L Abrams, L. (2013) 'The taming of highland masculinity: inter-personal violence and shifting codes of manhood c.1760-1840', *Scottish Historical Review*, 92.1 (2013), pp. 100-122. ISSN 0036-9241. (REF2) (doi:[10.3366/shr.2013.0139](https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2013.0139))
4. E Gordon and G Nair, G. (2006) 'Domestic fathers and the Victorian parental role', *Women's History Review* 15.4 (2006). pp. 551-559. ISSN 0961-2025. (doi:[10.1080/09612020500530588](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020500530588))
5. A Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland 1919-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010). ISBN 9780748639816 [Available from HEI] (REF2)
6. A Hughes, 'Representation and Counter-Representations of Domestic Violence on Clydeside between the Two World Wars', *Labour History Review* Special issue on Working Class Masculinities, 69.2 (2004), pp. 169-184. ISSN 0961-5652. [Available from HEI]

4. Details of the impact

Research from UoG has provided the evidence base driving public-facing initiatives to address the lack of information and awareness about women's contribution to Scotland's society, economy and culture. The work to recognise and celebrate the role of women is implemented at all levels and all ages. Our work has:

- a. created cultural capital by contributing to public understanding of the position and experience of women in Scottish society; and,
- b. provided research for policy-makers and agencies to inform policy and practice on contemporary gender issues in Scottish society.

a. Contributing to public understanding of the position and experience of women in Scottish society

The [Women of Scotland project](#) developed by UoG's Centre for Gender History was implemented through collaboration with Women's History Scotland, Glasgow Women's Library and Girl Guiding Scotland and was funded by a Lottery Awards for All grant (AFS/1/010349993; £5,840), plus charitable donations from the Martin Connell Charitable Trust, The Hugh Fraser Foundation and The Mary Andrew Charitable Trust. Women of Scotland enabled members of the public to contribute to a national record of memorials to women in Scotland and was organised and administered by Women's History Scotland. The project began in 2011 with 'The Big Name Hunt', which facilitated Rainbows, Brownies and Girl Guides in Scotland to work towards their 'Heritage Badge' through the identification of memorials to women in their area, and learning about the women's lives and work. In March 2012 the project was launched Scotland-wide to the general public as 'Mapping Memorials to Women in Scotland' and since then more than 300 memorials to

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192 women have been mapped. In spring 2013, the project went 'on the road', with training sessions in the use of the memorial mapping system held in Aberdeen, Inverness, Alness and Brora.

The beneficiaries of this work fall into several categories. Girl Guiding Scotland was an important initial partner. Girl Guides on the 'Big Name Hunt' were recruited to discover plaques, statues, street names or other commemorations of women in their local areas and report these to the project team for addition to the map. They also took part in team activities within their troops, themed around the Big Name Hunt.

One notable example of how research into the role of women in Scottish history and society has translated into very real recognition of the importance of that role within a community is evidenced by the activity in the Shieldhill community. When, as part of the Big Name Hunt, the 1st Braes Girl Guide Troop found that they could not find any commemoration of notable women in their area, they identified and researched a local midwife who they felt should be celebrated for her contributions to the community. They raised money through local events and won funds from the [O2 'Think Big' Fund](#) to

establish a memorial bench (*pictured, above*) that now sits outside the Shieldhill and Blackbraes Church Hall. The Girl Guides found that midwife Mary Cockburn (1875-1943) (*pictured, below*) not only delivered babies but she fed and cared for the families of the new mothers. She also spent 10 days on-site treating survivors of the 1923 Redding pit coalmine disaster. The participation of the local Girl Guides in the Big Name Project resulted in a wave of community recognition and support, with the local bowls club even organising a memorial tournament in her honour.

In addition to communities, the general public have benefited from the additional knowledge and the opportunity to contribute to the Mapping Memorials project. Since March 2012 when the website went live to the wider public, more than 13,000 people from over 50 countries have visited the site, offering names of women, information on memorials and updates on entries. The project is being rolled out nationwide via Glasgow Women's Library outreach work in adult continuing education and in public information sessions in Clydebank, Dumbarton, Edinburgh Central Library, and in the Highlands & Islands region. The information captured on the website has been used to inform the 'women's history trails' offered by the Women's Library in Glasgow and by volunteers in Wigtown (featured on the [Destination Dumfries & Galloway tourism website](#)) – the ITC and Systems Administrator from the Glasgow Women's Library talked about the Women of Scotland programme on Castle FM on 12 November 2012 to an audience of 250,000 listeners, and the project – and its theme of recognising women's place in history – was promoted at an event at the Wigtown Book Festival in October 2012, and at events in Edinburgh and Dumfries. The project was featured on BBC Radio Scotland's 'Past Lives' programme on 20 August 2012. The public launch of the site received the support of Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond, and attracted media coverage with an estimated footprint of 109,000, including features in *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Evening Times*.



b. Informing policy and practice in contemporary gender issues in Scottish society

The strong body of research expertise in the history of the family in Scotland, masculinity and domestic violence has, through consistent engagement, informed the work of a range of public and non-governmental organisations. UoG's Centre for Gender History has developed working relationships with Glasgow Women's Library, Scottish Women's Aid and the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit and a host of national and local organisations dealing with abuse, mental health, justice and community issues. They have discussed domestic abuse and family violence in the media to raise the profile of these issues and give a historical perspective. The Women in Scotland project has helped to expand Glasgow Women's Library reach throughout Scotland with information and training events nationwide, and the Centre has built a good working relationship with the Library throughout the course of this project. Glasgow Women's Library is a partner in Gordon, Hughes and Elliot's AHRC funded project on 'Working Class Marriage in Scotland' (£792k, 2012-15) and the Centre is collaborating with the Library, Women's History Scotland and Scottish Women's Aid on a history of Scottish Women's Aid (Heritage Lottery Funding application submitted). Another member of the UoA and Centre (Bracke) is a member of the Glasgow Women's Library Advisory Board.

In 2010, with support from a Workshop award from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, gender historians from Glasgow held a workshop for practitioners from Scottish Women's Aid, researchers and members of the Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit (which works with young people involved in gangs) to examine the relevance of historical research on masculinity on contemporary domestic abuse issues. Academics, practitioners, responders and policy-makers exchanged insights on domestic violence and strategies to address the issue in today's society.

Hughes gave a lecture on 'An Ambiguous Relationship?: Policing, Prosecuting and Censuring Wife-beating in Scotland c1870-1939' in May 2010 for the Scottish Institute for Policing Research – also available as a [podcast](#). This provided an opportunity for contemporary crime and policing issues to be considered from a historical perspective.

The Centre co-hosted a conference with Scottish Women's Aid for International Women's Day in March 2012 on domestic abuse, attracting practitioners from 19 national and local organisations dealing with domestic violence against women, children and men, mental health issues, criminal justice, sexual assault, abuse, community safety, rehabilitation and criminal law. Forty-four attendees signed up to receive further information after the course for educational use within their organisations. The conference marked Scottish Women's Aid's 35th anniversary and in the view of SWA's coordinator:

provided a forum for information exchange that continued ongoing debates about theory and practice and how these intersect; it highlighted developments in legal, housing, social work practice, reminding us of the need to keep listening to victims/survivors if we are to make a difference.

Centre researchers also appeared on BBC Radio Scotland's 3-part series *Disposable Brides*, from 13 April 2011. BBC Radio Scotland's reach for that quarter was 1,035,000 viewers. Abrams also contributed to BBC Radio Scotland's 4-part series [Killing: the History of Murder in Scotland](#) in March 2013. Also in 2013, the Centre for Gender History ran a public engagement event on 'Women and the Value of Work', a collaboration with the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the campaigning organisation 'Close the Gap' and Women's Enterprise Scotland, investigating the place and value of women's work within and in relationship to the family in the past and present.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Evidencing contribution to public understanding and awareness

1. Women of Scotland memorial mapping site – see [\[link\]](#)
2. Women of Scotland – [message from Alex Salmond MSP, First Minister of Scotland](#)
3. Girl Guiding Scotland – see [Annual Review 2011](#), pg. 10 citing the Big Name Hunt.
4. O2 'Think Big' Project – coverage of 'Memorial Bench to a Memorable Midwife' – see [\[link\]](#)
5. Destination Dumfries & Galloway – [Women's Heritage Walk brochure](#)
6. Girl Guiding Scotland – contact details provided for Working Group Chair
7. Glasgow Women's Library – contact details provided for ITC & Systems Administrator

Evidencing influence on policy and practice in contemporary gender issues

8. Scottish Women's Aid – contact details provided for Learning & Development Coordinator