Notable Nottingham Women

The campaign for women's suffrage is considered to have begun in 1866, when 1,499 women signed a petition presented to Parliament by the Liberal MP John Stuart Mill.

Catherine Turner (1797-1894), was one of the 49
Nottingham women who signed the petition. A
widow, known as Mrs Henry Turner, she established
a girls' boarding school at Lenton Fields. She was also
a Sunday School teacher at High Pavement Chapel
alongside Ann Cowen (d 1904). Mrs Cowen was
the first Secretary of the Nottingham Branch of the
Women's Suffrage Society, founded in 1881.

High Pavement Chapel was a centre of Liberal politics and social conscience in the late 19th-century. Alice Dowson (1844-1927), wife of solicitor Benjamin Dowson, also worked with the Nottingham Women's Suffrage Committee. Her diary entries illustrate the tireless campaigning of the suffragists, and her sympathy for the treatment of the more militant suffragettes:

"Our blood was set on fire this morning on seeing in the papers that the suffragettes in prison are

being forcibly fed! Words will not express our bitter indignation."

(28 September 1909, from Alix Meynell, What Grandmother Said (Cambridge, 1998), 245)

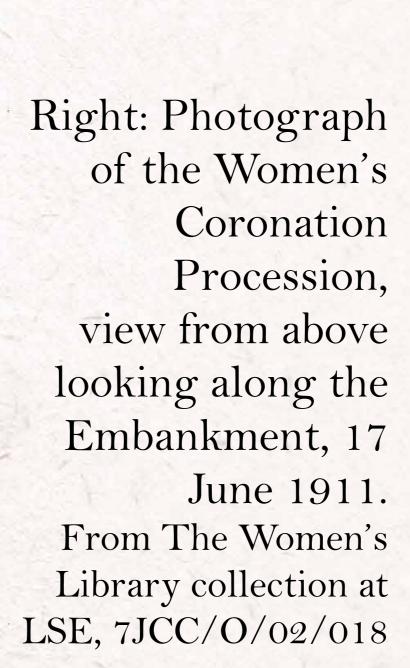
On 17 June 1911, at the age of 66, Alice Dowson was one of the 40,000 people at the Women's Coronation March in London, the largest demonstration to date in favour of women's suffrage.

Alice's daughter-in-law Helena (Nellie) Brownsword Dowson (1866-1964) was also Secretary of the Nottingham Women's





Above: Portrait of Ann Cowen, late 19th-century High Pavement Collection, Hi 3 P 128





Suffrage Society and a member of the national Executive Committee. She was the first woman in Nottingham to become a magistrate, serving from 1920 to 1950. She was also elected to Nottingham City Council for Meadows Ward in 1920, and was a member of the Council of University College Nottingham.

All of these women were highly educated, energetic, and dedicated to the cause of women's suffrage.

Right: Photograph of Helena Brownsword Dowson, c.1928

University Photographs, UMP/2/4/11

Above: Painted portrait of Catherine Turner

(standing) and Mrs Enfield, by 'Redgate',

High Pavement Collection, Hi 3 P 81

late 19th-century



