

# Notable Nottingham Women

A Selection  
of Elections  
Votes, Suffrage and Reform



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.



Above: Painted portrait of Catherine Turner (standing) and Mrs Enfield, by 'Redgate', late 19th-century  
High Pavement Collection, Hi 3 P 81

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



Right: Photograph of Helena Brownsword Dowson, c.1928  
University Photographs, UMP/2/4/11



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



Right: Photograph of the Women's Coronation Procession, view from above looking along the Embankment, 17 June 1911.  
From The Women's Library collection at LSE, 7JCC/O/02/018

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.