



Breaking the Glass Chamber:

Women, Politics, and Parliament in Britain, 1945-1997

Queen Mary University of London, 15-17 September 2022

2022 marks a series of historic anniversaries for women in British politics. It is forty years since the election of Harriet Harman, the Mother of the House; thirty-five years since the election of the first Black woman MP, Diane Abbott; thirty years since the first woman, Betty Boothroyd, was elected to Speaker of the House; and twenty-five years since the election of more than a hundred women MPs for the Labour Party. This list of milestones might seem to suggest that women made steady, if slow, progress into British political life in the post-war period. The reality was rather different.

Why did it remain so difficult for women to achieve full inclusion and equal participation in British politics? What were their political priorities and objectives and how far did they achieve their goals? What was their impact on British political culture and practices? How did they participate in politics as volunteers, campaigners, organisers, councillors, agents, researchers, theorists and policymakers as well as legislators?

This conference will provide an important opportunity to showcase emerging work on women and politics in the second half of the twentieth century in Britain, bringing historians together with political scientists and sociologists to generate new conversations, relationships and understandings of what politics meant to and for women in the second half of the twentieth century.

Keynote Speakers:

- Laura Beers, Professor of History, American University, Washington DC
- Clarisse Berthèzene, Professor of Modern British History, University of Paris
- Sarah Childs, Professor of Politics and Gender, Royal Holloway, University of London
- Julie Gottlieb, Professor of Modern British History, University of Sheffield
- Farah Hussain, Research Fellow, Mile End Institute, Queen Mary University of London
- Khursheed Wadia, Associate Professor in Sociology, University of Warwick

Some of the best papers will be included in a future edition of *Contemporary British History*, planned for late 2024. We are particularly keen to encourage session formats which beyond the traditional paper submission, and would be delighted to receive ideas based on, for example, interviews and ‘in conversations’, round tables and lightening sessions, collaborative dialogues and debates, or visual and material culture displays. We are planning to host round tables and panels with MPs, activists, and other party figures to add to our understanding of the history and future of women’s participation in British politics.

We are interested in considering histories of women's involvement in politics in this period, including, but not limited to, the following themes:

- **Parliament and electoral politics**
- **Legislation and policy**
- **Political parties and movements**
- **Candidates and electioneering**
- **Local government and European politics**
- **Party political roles, such as agents, organisers and whips**
- **Parliamentary roles, such as committee service**
- **The civil service and staff on the parliamentary estate**
- **Special advisors and think tanks**
- **Foreign affairs and international diplomacy**
- **Nationalist movements and claims for devolution**
- **Trade unions, campaigning groups and activist movements**
- **Thatcher, Thatcherism and women**
- **The experiences of specific groups of women, including but not limited to, working-class, lesbian, ethnic minority, and disabled women**
- **Women as gatekeepers and obstacles to female participation**
- **Contemporary representations and cultural memories**

We anticipate that some elements of the conference may be hosted online, but hope the bulk of the event will take place in person. Our funding will allow us to offer places at reduced rates for students.

Proposals are welcomed from scholars at all career stages, including those without an institutional affiliation, and we actively encourage submissions from students and early career scholars. We also welcome proposals from non-academics working in, for example, the heritage sector, public or community history, and researchers within political parties, think tanks and the voluntary sector. Proposals should not exceed 250 words. Please also include a brief biography.

Please submit your proposals to womenpowerpolitics2022@gmail.com by 29 April 2022.

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