

Scotland's Heroines: The Representation of Women in Scotland's Secondary Curriculum

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History is about understanding the past and all its diversity; history which ignores one half of the human race is bad history (Osler, 1994).

Studies by Osler (1994) and Lockyer and Tazzyman (2016) have expressed a concerning lack of representation of women's history within the English curriculum which restricts study of women's history to monarchs and suffragettes. Furthermore, this representation of women's history is largely presented in a separate unit rather than integrated into the curriculum, 'othering' historical study on women. This concern can be extended to the current Scottish curriculum. Academics such as Abrams (2011) have emphasised how academia on Scottish women - and the study of women's history in Western historiography - has expanded considerably during recent decades; but this expansion is yet to be reflected in Scottish classroom practice. This work will address why an inclusive curriculum of both genders is important and the current situation concerning the representation of Scottish women in the Scottish secondary school curriculum. Finally, this work will give recommendations on both the achievements and milestones of some Scottish women that could be naturally included within the Scottish curriculum and changes that could be made to take meaningful strides towards greater gender inclusivity in Scotland's secondary history curriculum.

What is 'Women's History'?

To discuss the issues concerning women's history representation in the Scottish curriculum we must first define the term 'women's history'. Academics suggest that the term 'women's history' has origins in the mid-20th century as a result of growing interest concerning historical women and the influence of feminist movements within academia (Kent, 2012; Lerner, 1975). Murphy (1992) states women's history could be described as the study of history where women are the subject focus. This term is perhaps an over-simplification of the complexity and diversity of women's history in modern scholarship. Nevertheless, due to the clarity it provides, this definition will be applied by this paper. Women's history cannot be considered as indistinguishable from feminist history, as feminist history considers history from an ideologically feminist standpoint (Rowbotham, 1973). This deviates from 'women's history' as historians focusing on women as the subject matter of historical academia do not always inherently hold feminist views (Murphy, 1992). It should also be noted that 'women's history' does not define women as one

homogenous group but recognises and discusses the diversity of women's historical experiences (MacIntosh 1983).

Why Teach About Scotland's Women?

With limited space and time in current secondary curricula, the question is raised 'why teach women's history?'. Educators such as Levstik and Groth (2002), and Crocco (1997) stress the lack of women's history in Western education curricula is an issue which should be addressed. Both have highlighted in their research that an imbalance of gender equality within the history curriculum impacts students' perceptions and can lead to the inaccurate assumption that women have historically done little that is 'noteworthy'. This view is reflected in Lockyer and Tazzymant's (2016) study on pupils views on women within the English curriculum where one student stated, 'I don't think it's deliberately more about men though, without being sexist, there is more to learn about men, they've done more' (Lockyer and Tazzymant, 2016, p.11). MacIntosh (1983) also warns that the absence of women in history curricula or presenting women as 'victims' throughout society, gives pupils little to aspire to in terms of historical role-models and could lead to the normalisation of women in a subordinate role. It can therefore be argued that the teaching of 'noteworthy' Scottish women within the Scottish curriculum can challenge assumptions that women have not contributed to society and provides historical role models for students. This work is focussed on including Scottish women as part of education on Scottish history. However, women could of course be included in other areas of historical study.

Current Representation of Women in the Scottish Secondary Curriculum

Scotland has taken strides to promote gender inclusivity throughout multiple disciplines within both primary and secondary education. This is evidenced by resources such as 'Gender Equality: A Toolkit for Education Staff' (Scottish Executive, 2007). The document emphasises recommendations to promote inclusion of all genders within school environments, including looking historically at the perspectives of both genders. Whilst these guidelines are commendable, the extent to which they are implemented in the Scottish curriculum, including history, is debatable. Scotland's secondary history curriculum can largely be divided into two sections, junior level, known as Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Level which includes more prescriptive documents about the topics and people studied within Scottish schools.

Broad General Education (BGE)

Scotland's BGE phase has a largely non-prescriptive approach in specifying actual content, focusing more on the skills students should gain from their subjects. The Scottish Government has outlined goals for Primary and BGE level students known as the 'Experiences and Outcomes' (hereafter E's and O's) which highlights desired knowledge and skills. The history component of E's and O's (titled 'people, past events and societies') gives some guidance on what should be taught, stressing focus on the history of Scotland (Education Scotland, n.d). Besides references to 'local' or 'Scottish' history' the Scottish Government entrusts subject content largely to educators, therefore giving teachers opportunities to be curriculum developers at BGE level (Smith, 2019).

As BGE documents specify a requirement to teach 'Scottish' or 'local' history it follows that Scottish women could be included to meet this condition. In fact it can be argued that including women's history at BGE level is vital in students having a balanced understanding of the past, as Smith finds that around 50% of pupils will not take history as a further subject in their senior phase (Smith, 2019). Thus, these initial years should include aspects of women's history or risk the possibility of giving students the impression that woman did not significantly contribute to society (Pearson, 2012).

Smith (2019) argues based on his study of the curriculum within an array of Scottish schools that many tend to focus on specific periods of history. He notes that most schools teach milestones such as World War One and the Wars of Independence. These topics centre on political or military history which, as both Woyshner (2002) and McDermid (2011) stress, are largely male dominated. McDermid (2011) suggests that Scottish history is often associated with masculinity, with much of the literature focusing on 'great battles' and heroic figures. This is highlighted by the fact that historic sites such as the National Wallace Monument's Hall of Heroes predominantly features the achievements of Scottish men. Two women are featured out of the eighteen busts in the hall, and these women were only recently added to the display in April 2019 (The National Wallace Monument, n.d). McDermid (2011) stresses that in order to change this narrative, new scholarship on the contribution and viewpoint of Scottish women in political and military events, such as that of World War One and the Wars of Independence which are commonly taught in the BGE curriculum, must be utilised. Whilst the teaching of these topics is not universally applied to all Scottish BGE history classrooms, it can be said the general trend is to focus on these traditionally male-dominated topics due to an abundance of Scottish based resources and literature available.

Senior Phase

In general, senior phase documentation puts more emphasis on the inclusion of women in various aspects of the history curriculum, not limiting this to specifically Scottish history. The senior phase has an increased prescriptive approach, particularly at National 5 and Higher as the content of these courses relates to exams written by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (hereafter SQA). Notable women and women's movements are explicitly mentioned within the course guide and must be covered if schools choose to study these topics. Thus, in the Senior Phase it is likely that pupils studying history will experience some sort of women's history compared to the BGE phase.

Within the National 5 and Higher course specifications women are primarily mentioned in three contexts: monarchs, activists and war workers. The National 5 course has one female orientated course titled '*Mary Queen of Scots, and the Reformation, 1542–1587*' (SQA 2019, p5), Mary is also explicitly mentioned in the Higher course specification under the topic '*The Age of the Reformation, 1542–1603*' (SQA 2019, p22). Other reference is made to the work of women in units which discuss the suffragettes, suffragists and changing role of Scottish women during World War One. This gives flexibility to discuss variety of women such as Mary Barbour and Elsie Inglis, whilst not explicitly mentioning these women in the guidelines. Whilst the focus on 'exceptional others' such as monarchs, suffragettes

and rent strikers has been criticised by scholars such as MacIntosh (1983) for not truly reflecting the experiences of most women at the time, it remains a step forward in providing examples of politically engaged female role models and challenging potential assumptions that women have not contributed significantly to political or military changes throughout history.

Whilst these topics are moving to a more gender balanced curriculum, issues have been identified. For example, whilst efforts have been made to explore women's political activity through units discussing women's enfranchisement and activism, this rarely goes beyond a lone section or exam question. The compartmentalisation of women in the Scottish curriculum reduces women to 'the other' and apart from 'normative' narratives. This has been similarly expressed in studies on the English and American curriculum by academics such as Crocco (1997) and Osler (1994). Noddings (2001) called this the 'add and stir' approach. Noddings (2001) defines this as adding women's history in western education curricula as a separate unit or heading other than 'normal' history focusing on 'women's work' rather than just the work of all genders including women. Levstik (2009) and Noddings (2001) note that separating 'women's history' from 'mainstream' study can lead to women's history being perceived as an add-on. It should be noted that, with the exception of monarchs, women's contribution to history is largely only present in areas that focus on the late 19th and early to mid-20th century. This issue is similarly highlighted in the English curriculum in Lockyer and Tazzymant's study which states:

they (students) appeared to think that women had been completely shackled by patriarchy... before 1900... in seeking to demonstrate how momentous the women's suffrage movement ... was for women, some history teachers may have unintentionally undermined students' ideas about women who lived before the twentieth century. (Lockyer and Tazzymant, 2016, p.11)

Despite these limitations it should be noted that the inclusion of women throughout various topics in the Scottish senior secondary curriculum remains a meaningful step toward a gender balanced history curriculum. As Noddings (2001) and MacIntosh (1983) state exploration into the lives of 'notable' women in the past is preferential to no exploration at all. However, the curriculum could do more to explicitly mention female figures rather than ambiguous headings which gives flexibility to largely leave out women's contribution.

Whose Story and How?

It is important to have women's narratives and viewpoints present in a variety of topics throughout both BGE and senior phase. It is recommended that these are naturally integrated throughout the curriculum regularly rather than as a separate unit or lessons falling into this pattern of 'add and stir' (Noddings,2001). This section will focus on notable Scottish women that could be included within the curriculum both at BGE and senior level in various topics that are already frequently taught within the Scottish curriculum. It will also highlight several key resources that could be utilised for further study on Scottish women's history which educators could use within the classroom. This section is not exhaustive, there are countless Scottish women who could be discussed in schools to give a wider representation

of women in different time periods of Scottish history. When potentially discussing women's narratives within the classroom it should be done alongside rather than as a juxtaposition to the dominant male viewpoints in order to create an integrated curriculum rather than dividing it into 'regular history' aka the traditionally male dominated topics and 'women's history' as women's history should be viewed as an inclusive part of the history curriculum rather than as a side note (Lockyer and Tazzymant, 2016). These examples will include, but will not be limited to, the 19th and 20th century where exploration and documentation of women's history has considerably more resources.

As many Scottish schools cover the Wars of Independence at BGE or Senior level women such as Isabella MacDuff could be included as well as the often already discussed 'Maid of Norway'. Isabella MacDuff, Countess of Buchan was an important figure in the Scottish Wars of Independence, she was married to John Comyn Earl of Buchan, however when her husband turned to the English side during the Wars of Independence, she did not follow his lead. Isabella, against her husband's wishes, crowned Robert the Bruce, as Scottish kings had traditionally been crowned by a member of clan MacDuff. When Robert the Bruce was defeated at the Battle of Methven, Isabella was captured by Edward II's men and spent at least 4 years in a cage. Isabella was eventually released but little is written about the rest of her life. Her act of defiance was crucial to Robert the Bruce having legitimacy in Scotland. Several books discuss Isabella's contributions such as *Proud Lady in a Cage* (Urquhart, 1980) and she is mentioned in *Scotland: Her Story: The Nation's History by the Women Who Lived It* (Goring, 2018) which provides primary resources, which could be used in the classroom. Additionally, other Scottish women such as Susannah Crawford and Christina MacRuaridh (known as Christina 'of the Isles') also played significant roles in supporting Robert the Bruce and his cause for Scottish Independence (Ewan and Meikle, 1998), these women could also be included in classroom content.

Another notable woman prior to the 19th century is Lady Agnes Campbell, who led troops for Irish resistance against the English and helped gain support for Irish resistance in Scotland in the late 1500's (Goring, 2018). Some schools may look at the Jacobite rebellion in which the valiant efforts of Flora MacDonald could be discussed. MacDonald aided the infamous Bonnie Prince Charlie in fleeing from Scotland following his defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 (Johnson, n.d).

Additionally, academia has seen a surge of resources about inspirational Scottish women in the 19th and 20th century such as the 'Edinburgh Seven' who were the first women to be accepted into a medical degree in the UK. Among them included Scottish born Elsie Inglis who was one of the first women to set up her own medical practice in Scotland and went on to play a huge role in WW1 setting up the Scottish Women's Hospitals Committee treating wounded soldiers on the front lines. Furthermore, women in the political sphere such as Rent Strike leader Mary Barbour and Katherine Marjory, the first Scottish female MP elected in 1923 and by 1924 she also held the role of parliamentary secretary to the Board of Education (Knox, 2006).

The aforementioned Scottish women make up only a small selection of examples of the meaningful contributions in Scotland's political and military landscape that women have been involved in from as early as the 13th century. As

such, these women should be known throughout modern Scotland. To quote Bettany Hughes:

There are brilliantly feisty women from history who have made an impact. We need to actively look for women's stories, and put them back into the historical narrative, there are so many women that should be household names but just aren't. (Hughes, 2016)

Modern resources that can be used in educational practice are available, such as Rosemary Goring's book *Scotland: Her Story: The Nation's History by the Women Who Lived It* (2018) which uses an abundance of primary resources to show the nation's history through the eyes of women. Additionally, Scotland is home to the only credited UK museum dedicated to women, the Glasgow Women's Library, which has resources both on women in Scotland and worldwide (Glasgow Women's Library, 2020). In addition to the growing number of published books on Scottish women's history, online articles are increasingly available to educators.

Admittedly, barriers to including women's history cannot be ignored. Crocco (1997) and Pearson (2012) highlight that lack of finances for new resources, and availability of varied teaching materials is an undeniable obstacle to including women's history at secondary level. However, these historians also argue that resources cannot be the singular reason for absence of women's history as contemporary academia provides a growing supply of primary and secondary resources free online. Woyshner (2002) argues that more needs to be done by educators to challenge the assumption that women have not been involved in political and military events. The preceding section contains several examples of how women have been involved, and have been independent, in making political decisions in Scotland for centuries, their stories should be told. The inclusion of women in history curriculum does not require a complete overhaul but that little changes and inclusions will build up over time to a gender inclusive curriculum.

Where can more resources be found?

One key barrier to the inclusion of women's history in the classroom is the lack of readily available resources. This section will focus on providing a handful of examples of books, websites and other resources that could be utilised within the classroom. Schools that are local to the central of Scotland may want look at trips to the Glasgow Women's Library which provide numerous resources on both Scottish and international women that could be used for class resources. This could also be said for the Wallace Monument Hall of Heroes which has recently had the addition of two Scottish heroines, Mary Slessor and Maggie Keswick Jencks, information on these women can be found on the Wallace Monument Website and from visitation to the hall itself (The National Wallace Monument, 2015). Additionally, schools who do not have this opportunity could use online resources such as the Women's History Scotland website which have committed to promoting the study of Scottish women's history both in academia and in primary and secondary education. This website not only provides numerous online resources but also mentions several key books which could also be used such as the '*New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*', '*The Documentary History of Women in 19th Century Scotland*' and '*The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish*

Women and Gender in Scottish History since 1700' (Women's History Scotland, 2020). In addition to this the aforementioned book by Rosemary Goring *'Her Story: The Nation's History by the Women Who Lived It'* (Goring, 2018) provides multiple primary sources both about and from the perspective of historic Scottish women which could be adapted for classroom use. These resources represent only a miniscule fraction of the growing literature and resources on Scottish women both within written and online academia.

Conclusion

Ultimately, whilst Scotland has made significant moves towards gender inclusivity in the history curriculum particularly at senior level, more needs to be done to reach gender balance, especially at BGE level as for many students this will be their only academic experience of history. Currently Scottish women's history in the curriculum suffers from narrow periodisation and having women in separate units rather than fully integrated which could lead to 'othering' women's history from 'normal' history in the minds of students. Pupils should develop a historical consciousness where both genders are valued to challenge discrimination and outdated views on gender and give a well-rounded view of Scotland's past. Scotland's curriculum mandates studying the nation's history, yet so many Scottish heroines are not currently in the narrative. It is the responsibility of educators to utilise the availability of modern resources on women in order to encourage gender balance within the curriculum. The smallest of changes still contributes to this important effort.

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