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Electing Women as County Councillors 1919 - 1939

Why?

- ▶ 1907 legislation paved the way for women to stand as candidates on County Councils, in London Boroughs, and towns/ cities.
- ▶ My research will ultimately compare all these, looking at statistics but also at who was elected and their roles.
- ▶ The current phase looks at County Councils in England.
- ▶ Just one woman became a County Councillor before 1914. Information about the inter-war years has not been collected before – so this is pioneering research.

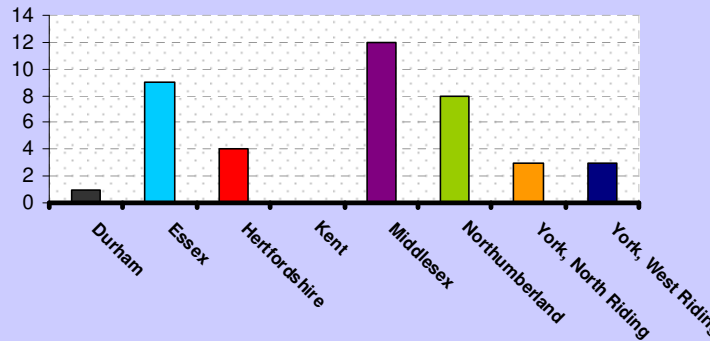
How?

- ▶ A small travel grant from the Royal Historical Society has enabled the collection of case study material from Counties like Durham and Kent.
- ▶ No statistics exist on the numbers of women elected to County Councils in this period, so regular visits to the British Library are necessary to compile information from directories.
- ▶ There is limited published comparative analysis of local elections, and hardly anything on County Councils. Local newspapers, political journals and some local studies provide supplementary information.
- ▶ Information collected about individuals then needs relating to the political and social change of this period.



Supporters of Elsie Royston, one of just two women elected to County Durham between the wars

Number of Women Councillors 1937
(selected County Councils)



Anne Baldwin

March 2009



Music, Humanities
and Media.
PhD History

Preliminary Findings

- ▶ Thirty years after they had the right to be candidates, there were no elected women at all on 4 of the 50 County Councils in England.
- ▶ The best performing were London and some councils near London – but not all of them. – Kent only had two women councillors in this period, and very few women standing as candidates.
- ▶ Several of the women elected had been co-opted members of education or maternity and child welfare committees, and continued to follow these interests.
- ▶ Some Counties elected many women from the titled elite. Wiltshire had two countesses and three ladies amongst 17 successful candidates.
- ▶ Women represented both Conservative and Labour parties, but Party does not seem to influence the numbers of candidates or the numbers of women elected.
- ▶ Some women in case studies also had relatives who were councillors, and some took over from a spouse or parent.