
Released to accompany the *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, Breitenbach et al. have created a sourcebook for women’s lives in the long nineteenth century. With seven chapters, this work ranges from the body to the home to work and public life. The introduction provides a survey on the current historiography before discussing the project rationale. Despite beginning in 1780, it is very much a “nineteenth-century” collection reflecting the concerns of a historiography on the Victorian period, and extrapolating outwards to encompass their origins and outcomes. This is a legitimate intellectual decision and is largely well done, but an early nineteenth-century scholar might have created something quite different.

Each chapter contains a brief introduction to the topic, a short context for each source, before providing the source material itself. All the sources are easily accessible in Scotland and many are available online, which is consistently demarcated in the text. This decision is particularly useful for students and new scholars requiring an introduction to the main collections. Sources written by, or concerning, women in the Dictionary are marked to direct the reader to that resource. As a result, *Scottish Women* will be a useful teaching tool—not just a convenient handbook of sources, but a text that can direct students to the wider primary sources available and their biographical and historiographical contexts.

The first chapter provides an innovative section on the body, sexuality and health, reflecting the growing literature on “body cultures,” including participation in formal recreation, rational clothing, and fashion; a longer historiography around policing female sexuality; the revisionist literature that emphasizes the Victorians’ appreciation of sexual pleasure; and finally, the growing work on the professionalization of medicine for women and their role in formal and informal medical practices. Chapter 2
complements this with a focus on “hearth and home,” the sphere traditionally associated with women and an important area of research for this period. It usefully connects literature on material conditions, such as that on housing and diet, to women’s practices of housekeeping at different social levels.

This is mirrored in Chapter 4, which connects the history of women’s work with that on working conditions, reflecting two of the most established literatures in the field. It gives examples of the types of occupations in which women worked, ranging from industrial work to fishing and knitting to the professions. It also includes the context of that work, often in reports written by female inspectors or by the trade union movement to which many women belonged. Whilst still a relatively new area of research for Scotland, women were involved in prison reform and the following chapter demonstrates this, whilst also exploring women who were involved in crime and sexual immorality—the consequences for which were not always that different from a criminal conviction. This is complemented by a chapter on women’s religious lives—recognized in the literature as an important source of authority for women as well as underpinning their interventions into wider public life. A considerable part of this chapter is devoted to women’s involvement in religious charitable work and in shaping the church hierarchy. Here the motivations of the prison reformers are contextualized and viewed alongside a variety of sources that gives insight to women’s personal experiences across the religious spectrum. Women’s roles in public life are brought out more fully in a chapter on formal politics and particularly suffrage, the most widely known political campaign associated with women. This is complemented with examples of women in political life before the suffrage movement, and by a section exploring how women’s involvement in party politics was shaped by feminism. The final chapter looks outwards from Scotland to its diaspora, exploring the experiences of women who left Scotland as pioneers, colonizers and visitors of foreign places. It presents evidence of women’s experience of dislocation and place, and their role in the politics of empire as colonizers themselves. The collection captures the nuances of this field, exploring the extent of and constraints on women’s agency, and how they were shaped by social class, wealth, and race.
Throughout, the collection brings a wide range of sources to the reader’s attention, from letters and diaries, to institutional reports, to songs and poems to art and photography. Most of these were produced by women, reminding us that not only is there a wealth of sources for Scottish women’s history but that women themselves were very much part of its making.

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