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Electing Women as County Councillors 1919 - 1939

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Election of 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.

**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.

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

Anne Baldwin
March 2009