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This is a walk designed by local community members, in collaboration with academic staff from the University of Manchester, which shows how women in this area have struggled against the odds to improve lives and change history.

Beginning (and ending!) with the amazing life of local lass Ellen Wilkinson, this walk shows that when you look below the surface, this area is revealed as a place vibrant with stories of trailblazing courage and world-changing vision.

Special thanks to all the contributors and supporters including: Mo Blue, Sandra Clare, Marie Donnelly, Carl Emery, Martin Greenwood, Taki Koffi, Shirley Okorodudu, Alison Reece

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Take a walk in the footsteps of some amazing women and their local stories!

ardwick
women's
footprints
self-guided walking tour



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Follow the map overleaf and walk along the route depicted by the dotted orange line.

When you reach a stop indicated by a dark blue circle with a number, turn over and read about that stop.

Stops with blue backgrounds are about people.

Stops in green are about places.

The stop in pink is an optional detour indicated on map



A bit of safety advice first...

If you're unfamiliar with the area, have a look at the route online before you embark, to help you feel confident you know where you're going. Remember also to watch out for traffic.

As with any neighbourhood, it's important to keep your belongings secure and be mindful of your surroundings. And remember - you're in the middle of a place where folk are going about their daily lives - so please respect the people, their streets and their homes!



Accessibility

The route has been designed to be walked or wheeled by as many people as possible, and there are places to take a break if you need it.

LET'S GET STARTED!

Follow the map overleaf to the start of the tour at Co-op Medlock Academy.

1

Balsam Close - Ellen Wilkinson

Pupils from the school have been learning to sew with Deputy Head Ruth Nutton-Jones to create a banner celebrating Ellen Wilkinson. In doing so they learnt all about her too. She was born here on 8 October 1891 and died on 6 February 1947 in London. She was a pioneering British politician, trade unionist, and social reformer who left a lasting legacy through her tireless campaigning for workers' rights, education, and the welfare of the disadvantaged. She was affectionately known as "Red Ellen" for her socialist beliefs, fiery speeches, and red hair. She was one of the first female Members of Parliament (MPs) in the UK. Born in what was then Coral Street, into a working-class Methodist family, she was aware from a young age of the social and economic struggles faced by ordinary people. More on Ellen later.



2

Wadeson Road - Lady Lloyd George

You may have heard of David Lloyd George, the only Welshman to have been Prime Minister. He was born in a tiny, terraced house just here. A newer house now stands on the site, and if you look carefully you can see a plaque commemorating him. But have you heard of his daughter, Lady Megan Arvon Lloyd George (1902-1966)? She was also a politician, the first Welsh female MP. She spent 30 years in Parliament and was named among "the 50 greatest Welsh men and women of all time." Speaking of David, her dad... Emmeline Pankhurst, sister of our featured local woman, Sylvia Pankhurst, once stood trial for a plot to blow up his holiday home!

3

Looking towards Ardwick Green - Louise Da-Cocodia

Before we turn down Grosvenor Street, take a moment here to look over in the grassy area across the street, and over the main road beyond it. There, you can make out Ardwick Green, an important local green space, as well as being the home to the Arawak Housing Association, founded by Louise Da-Cocodia. Shirley Okorodudu researched Louise and discovered she was a pioneering Jamaican nurse who came to Britain in 1955 and faced significant racism and discrimination while working in the NHS. Despite being given the hardest jobs and encountering prejudice from both colleagues and patients, Louise rose to become Manchester's first black senior nursing officer and a campaigner for racial equality. As well as founding the Arawak Housing Association she also set up the Cariocca Business Park. These Ardwick-based institutions were founded to support black and minority ethnic people but have now grown to support people from all communities. Her story highlights the vital contributions and resilience of Caribbean nurses in shaping the NHS.



5

Salvation Army/Greek St - Sylvia Sham

The history of the Salvation Army in Ardwick is connected to the Star Hall, a building that was originally a music hall - the kind of place where Athelda the Great might have performed (we'll hear more about Athelda later!). It was converted into a mission hall for factory workers in 1889 and handed over to the Salvation Army in 1919. After its transfer, the building was renamed and part of it became a maternity hospital that was used in conjunction with the Salvation Army until at least the 1960s.

Just behind the Salvation Army building is the Sheung Lok Wellbeing Centre. This is part of the Wai Yin Society, an organisation set up to help people migrating from China, but grew to provide support and advice to people from all backgrounds. Directing this organisation from 1998 was Dr Sylvia Sham, who came to Manchester from Hong Kong and a background of poverty and displacement. When she arrived she could not speak English but soon immersed herself into the community, determined to help others adjust to life in the UK. As well as directing the Wai Yin Centre, she served on many advisory boards and steering groups tasked with supporting BAME communities.

4

Lampport Court

For many years the flats around Grosvenor Street, with their council rents and proximity to the city centre, drew artists and musicians to build their creative lives in the blocks. In Lampport, flats were converted into temporary art galleries and musicians could often be seen lugging gear in and out of the building on the way to and back from gigs in the city and beyond. The first decade of the 2000s was a particularly fertile time for women-driven alternative and punk bands, with members of Valerie, Desolation Angels, Breaking Colts, Lonely, Hotpants Romance, Jackie O and Polythene all spending time here.

OPTIONAL DETOUR

Holden Gallery, formerly Chorlton Town Hall as indicated on the map

The former Chorlton-on-Medlock town hall has a powerful history: it is where the first UK woman, Lily Maxwell, cast a vote, and where the 1945 Pan-African Congress met to plan movements for decolonisation and racial justice. Its red plaque exists thanks to Kath Locke, born in 1928 to an English mother and Nigerian father, who faced lifelong racism - including being denied entry to grammar school despite passing the exam. Her experiences strengthened her commitment to social, racial, and gender equality. Lily Maxwell, a crockery shop owner mistaken for a male voter, was supported by her friend Lydia Becker when she cast her groundbreaking vote in 1867. Later unable to work due to illness, Lily died in poverty in the Withington Workhouse. Together, the actions of Lily, Lydia, Kath, and the Pan-African Congress highlight key moments in the ongoing struggle for justice and equality - moments that continue to inspire resistance and hope today.

6

Ardwick Climate Action Allotment

Ardwick Climate Action's mission is to protect the local environment through grassroots advocacy that engages the local community. Their work encompasses the rewilding of green spaces, monitoring pollution levels, and climate advocacy that serves to benefit everyone. You can take action by helping out with this allotment or volunteering at one of their monthly sessions. There is lots to learn about the environment at Manchester Museum later on this walk.

7

Gartside Gardens

Rusholme Road Cemetery, established in 1821 for religious dissenters, served as a burial ground until 1933. In 1954, Manchester Corporation acquired the land, requesting families to remove loved ones remains and their headstones (at their own cost) so it could be transformed into Gartside Gardens. The gardens were funded by John Henry Gartside, owner of nearby Pin Mill. Today, around 66,000 bodies remain buried beneath your feet. Burial records are available online offering insight into the harsh living conditions and common causes of death in the 19th century including measles, smallpox, consumption, and lung infections.



9

Mawson Rd - Yomi Mambu

While we're here, we should mention another trailblazing local legend who Alison Reece has been researching, Yomi Mambu was originally from Sierra Leone and became the first black Lord Mayor in England. She was also the first Lord Mayor born outside the UK, serving from 1989 to 1990. As a councillor for Rusholme, led initiatives for women and anti-discrimination, and is honoured with a sculpture in Manchester Town Hall. Like Louise Da-Cocodia she was a nurse who had faced racism during her nursing career, but had overcome this and risen to achieve extraordinary things. Remembered for her striking fashion sense and great sense of humour, memories of Yomi live on in the community and her boundary-breaking achievements still inspire.



10

Sylvia Pankhurst Way - Sylvia Pankhurst

Sylvia Pankhurst, born in Manchester and later buried in Ethiopia, was a lifelong activist who fought against fascism, racism, and for universal suffrage. Unlike others in the Pankhurst family, she believed voting rights should extend to all adults, not just rich men, and their wives. She was one of the most arrested suffragettes and abandoned her art career to campaign for working-class women's rights after witnessing their harsh living conditions. She defied societal norms by refusing to wed Italian anarchist, Silvio Corio, when pregnant as she objected to how many rights women lost after marriage. Together they went on to advocate for Ethiopia and Sylvia was honoured with a state funeral there for her contributions to maternal health and anti-colonial struggle.



8

Gartside Gardens Recreation Area - Khiara Keating

Now a vital recreational resource for the local community, Gartside Gardens highlights the importance of the area's green space as both the city centre and the university expand into the neighbourhood. One shining star of the local area who used to play on Gartside Gardens, and who's now played on the international stage, is Khiara Keating; the first black goalkeeper for the England Women's Football Team. Her mum, Nicola, who herself has contributed a huge amount to the local community, talks about raising kids in Ardwick, building a football team from the grassroots, and Khiara's amazing success.



13

Elizabeth Yarwood House - Elizabeth Yarwood

Dame Elizabeth Ann Yarwood dedicated more than 35 years to Manchester City Council, serving as a committed advocate for her community and as Lord Mayor in 1967. Her distinguished service was recognized with honours such as Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire and Honorary Alderman. Her legacy continued through Elizabeth Yarwood Court, a supported housing scheme named in her honour which stood on this spot until 2025. The building was demolished to make way for a huge redevelopment of this part of Upper Brook Street, featuring Life Sciences buildings and hundreds of student residences. Many former residents from Elizabeth Yarwood Court were moved to Brunswick Extra Care Village, and shared tales with our researchers.



14

Brunswick Park

The park was formerly the rest of Brunswick Street, a major artery historically part of Chorlton-on-Medlock and acquired its name from the street. The university undertook extensive redevelopment to create a large green space for the campus completed in 2018.

As you walk towards Whitworth Arch look down carefully, you might see the names of some trailblazing women including those you have already learnt about on this walk!

15

Manchester Museum - Lydia Becker

Manchester Museum displays many wonderful artefacts of archaeology, anthropology and natural history. Also here, stored in the museum archives, are some letters written to Charles Darwin by Manchester Suffragist Lydia Becker. Marie Donnelly investigated Lydia's life and found out she was an early campaigner for women's suffrage, as well as being a keen amateur scientist. Among her achievements was the discovery of a new method of drying flowers through which the flowers retained their vibrant colours. Her contributions to botany influenced Darwin's own work, and also helped transform printing and fabric design, through making dried flowers more readily copiable, in all their vibrant glory.



Ardwick Climate Action are currently working on honouring her memory near St. Saviour's Church on Plymouth Grove with the Lydia Becker Past, Present and Future Garden with plants, public art and educational activities.

12

Brunswick Church

Christ Church Brunswick, is an Anglican Church, situated on the edge of Manchester's city centre, on busy Brunswick Street. This road used to be even busier as a main tramway and was full of shops including delicious fish & chips.

The Positive Steps Project is a key part of the church's community activity, and one of its regular sessions is a women's group. Some of the women from this group have played a huge part in researching the women of Ardwick and producing this fantastic piece of work with the unwavering support of local beacon of positivity Mo Blue.

11

Apollo Theatre

The Apollo was opened in 1938, in all its Art Deco splendour, as a variety hall and cinema by Margaret Lockwood, who found fame in Alfred Hitchcock films. From the 60s it became a venue for pop concerts, hosting acts like Alison Moyet, Erykah Badu, Tina Turner and Lily Allen, continuing to bring big names to Ardwick today.

Ardwick's connections to variety and music hall have long roots, the roundabout you can see was surrounded by other settings that local audiences flocked to. Here Frances Rheinlander found fame as 'Athelda the Great' - a legendary strong-woman who performed astonishing feats of strength on music hall stages in the 1910s. She also got married locally, at All Saints Church, the site of which became All Saints Park after the church was bombed in WWII.

On your way down Brunswick Street you will walk past Brunswick Extra Care Village, in here Age UK Manchester worked with residents on the Ellen Wilkinson banners the school pupils were also making. In doing so, they too shared memories of Ardwick and shared their skills.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've finished the walk. We hope you have enjoyed learning about some of the amazing women and stories connected with Ardwick.

16

Whitworth Arch and Quad - Ellen Wilkinson's Story Part 2

Taki Koffi researched Ellen's life and found she earned a scholarship to the University of Manchester to study history. Ellen later joined the Independent Labour Party, where she quickly rose due to her intelligence and dedication to social justice. She began her career organising for the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, gaining national recognition for improving conditions for women and low-paid workers. In 1924, she became one of the first female Labour MPs, representing Middlesbrough East. She famously led the 1936 Jarrow March, where 200 unemployed men walked 300 miles to London to demand jobs. Though it didn't change policy immediately, the march became a lasting symbol of protest against poverty, mass unemployment and gross inequality.



17

Ellen Wilkinson Quad - Ellen Wilkinson's Story Part 3

During World War II, Ellen served in various roles under the wartime Labour government. In 1945, she became the first female Minister of Education, advocating for free secondary education, free school milk, and raising the school leaving age, believing education was key to escaping poverty. Mo Blue discovered that despite her achievements, Ellen faced challenges as a woman in a male-dominated field. Her health declined under pressure, and she died in 1947 at age 55, reportedly from heart failure caused by a medication overdose. Ellen's legacy endures as a champion of social justice, education, and equality. Her work in the Jarrow March and as Education Minister helped pave the way for women in politics and inspired future generations to fight for a fairer society. On her first day in office as the first female Chancellor, Rachel Reeves MP, put a portrait of Ellen up in her office, vowing to ensure all art in 11 Downing Street should be either by female artists or of female figures.

