

Henrietta Carey 1845-1920

Social reformer, Founder of Town and County Social Guild

Suffragist, Member of NUWW

Henrietta was born at 22 St Mary's Gate, her father Henry was a lace manufacturer with premises in the Lace Market. By 1861 the family had moved to Park Row, by 1881 to Castle Grove and finally by 1891 to Trent Leigh 48 The Ropewalk where Henrietta lived for the rest of her life.

She was involved in religious and social work for 50 years, founding Nottingham Town and Country Social Guild (TCSG) on Upper Parliament Street (still there behind a façade next to The Stage pub) in 1875 along with her sister Fanny, Mrs Bowman-Hart and Samuel Johnson the Town Clerk. Henrietta was Guild secretary for 40 years and the driving force behind it's work. It was based on Ruskin's Guild of St George and was concerned to improve the lives of the poor particularly promoting self-improvement and as a result of her work many helping organisations were set up e.g. convalescent homes at Fiskerton, Castle Donnington and Skegness, a Society for Organising Charity similar to that established in London by Octavia Hill in 1869 (forerunner of NCVS) a blanket loan association, a Provident society, Penny Dinners Movement, a girl's club, a hostel for women working in the city, a Friendly society etc.

She headed up the Ladies Sanitary Association which helped women transform many worker's homes running competitions for cleanliness or the best flower displays – though this did lead to some criticism as a snooper! Henrietta was very involved in the National Union of Women Workers which was formed in 1895 to provide a platform for women who worked mostly in a voluntary capacity aiming for 'the social, moral and religious elevation of their own sex'.

She was in correspondence with John Ruskin from 1875 and some of the letters are in Nottm. Archives, and she was accepted as a full Companion of St George's Guild meaning that she gave 1/10 of her income to the Guild. He promised her a painting by Andrea del Verrocchio for the Guild in Nottingham but this was refused by the curator of the Sheffield Museum. Ruskin also said that he would be pleased to meet her but it isn't clear if they ever did meet. He did send her a collection of shells books and plates and she received his permission to call the collection by his name and the Ruskin room at the Guild was established – later the collection went to the Castle Museum – she was the sister-in-law of G W Wallis the Curator.

In addition to all of her social and philanthropic reforming work she was also a water colour painter and some of her paintings appeared in the Local Artists Exhibition at the Castle Museum in 1879, 1880 and 1881. She established the Kyrle Society modelled on that set up in London by Octavia and Mirander Hill and aimed to bring a 'refining and cheering influence of national and artistic beauty into the homes and neighbourhoods of the poor'. She was also interested in women's suffrage and was a Patron of the East Midland Federation of the NUWSS Fete in 1912 – along with her sister, Kate Watson Carey.

During WW1 she had even greater demands on her time with increased demands on the Convalescent homes, she promoted War Savings movement and chaired a works canteen committee. She died on July 20th 1920 and is buried in the Carey plot in the Church or Rock Cemetery with the following verse

Life's race well run
Life's work well done
Life's crown well won
Now cometh rest.

There is a hexagonal plaque to her on 455 and 457 The Wells Road erected in 1926 on what were '2 houses of rest for poor people'. She had done more than any other woman to improve the lot of her fellow citizens according to her obituary in Nottm Guardian.