On 6th February 1918, after decades of struggle, the Representation of the People Act finally gave the vote to some women. That year, statistics showed that 30% of all householders were women, and it’s fair to say her life took quite a turn after her few years in Sheffield. In 1914, after clashes over her socialist politics, Adela’s mother Emmeline gave her a one-way ticket to Australia. There, she got involved in communist and anti-war causes, before becoming an organiser for the fascist Australia First Movement in the 1940s.

You won’t find plaques commemorating most of these people or events, but each deserves to be remembered for the part they played in the ongoing march towards equality.

Produced by Off the Shelf festival of words to celebrate Suffrage 100 in 2018. Funded by the University of Sheffield’s Alumni Fund Departmental Grant.
The start of the story of British women's struggle for the vote can arguably be dated to 26th February 1851, when the first organisation dedicated to the cause was formed in a Sheffield hotel. The Sheffield Women's Political Association was run by women for women, most of whom were active in the working class Chartist movement. One of the instigators was well-known abolitionist Anne Knight, who wrote what's considered the first pamphlet on women's suffrage, inspired by her frustration at the silencing of female delegates at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention. In order to have their voices heard and respected, it became clear, women had to have the vote. Addressed to “the women of England – Beloved Sisters”, the association’s manifesto, written by its chair Abiah Higginbottom, called on women to “shake off our apathy and raise our voices for right and liberty, till justice in all its fulness is conceded to us... for what is liberty if the claims of women are disregarded?” The women sent a petition to the House of Lords, though it would be some years before a national movement gained momentum.

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