**Abbott [*née* Lamond], Wihelmina Hay [known as Elizabeth]** (1884-1957) Scottish feminist, women’s suffrage campaigner, activist, lecturer and organiser for national women’s organisations, was born at 11 XX Road (can’t read bc), Dundee, Scotland, on 22 May 1884, the second daughter of Margaret Morrison (1845-XX) and her husband Andrew Lamond (1848-XX) a commercial agent, merchant and jute manufacturer. She had one older sister, Isabel Taylor Lamond (1880-1914). During her early childhood the family moved to London where they lived in Tottenham. Elizabeth was educated at the City of London School for Girls and then in Brussels, training as an accountant and secretary during the years 1903 to 1906. In 1907 she studied ethics, philosophy and economics at University College London for a summer term. On 7 February 1911 she married George Frederick Abbott (1874-1947), a travel writer and author, at Westminster Registry Office, and they moved into 96 Church Street, Chelsea, London. Their only child, Jasper Andrew Richard Abbott (1911-1960) was born on 5 October 1911 and went on to become a commander in the Royal Navy.

From the age of twenty-five Elizabeth Abbott became a life long campaigner for the advancement of women’s rights. Returning to Scotland in 1909 she campaigned on the Orkney Islands for the Edinburgh National Society for Women’s Suffrage, affiliated to the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). The following year she was appointed to the Executive Committee and as Secretary of the Scottish Federation of Women’s Suffrage Societies. Her involvement in both these organisations as an organiser and speaker indicates her strong commitment to the women’s suffrage movement demanding the right of women to vote in parliamentary elections. By 1911 she had returned to live in London, married and given birth to her son Jasper. Following the outbreak of the First World War she took up the role of organising secretary to the Scottish Women’s Municipal Party for the period 1914 to 1916. After that she embarked on a new venture travelling overseas on a lecture tour of New Zealand, Australia and India. This trip, which lasted from 1916 to 1919, was to raise funds for the Scottish Women’s Hospitals and it was reported that she raised £60,000 over the four-year period.

On her return to England in 1919 Abbott lived at 10 Elm Park Road, Chelsea. In July that year she successfully applied to replace Mary Sheepshanks as London Headquarters’ Secretary to the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). Founded in 1904 this transnational women’s organisation, led by well-known feminist campaigners including Carrie Chapman Catt, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Margery Corbett Ashby and Chrystal MacMillan, was set up to internationalise the fight for the women’s vote and to campaign on a range of egalitarian reforms including equal pay and an equal moral standard. Taking up her new post in 1920, Abbott additionally became editor of the influential IWSA monthly journal *Jus Suffragii.* The periodical was renowned forreporting on international campaigns for the women’s vote, the peace movement and demands for gender equality across the globe. Abbott resigned as IWSA Secretary in 1921 but remained editor of *Jus Suffragii* until 1929 when the new Secretary, Katherine Bompass, took over the role.

In addition to her work for the IWSA Abbott was an active member of other key feminist and women’s societies throughout her lifetime. This included the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), formally the NUWSS, and in 1923 she represented the NUSEC at the IWSA.

In May 1926 Abbott, along with Lady Rhondda (founder of *Time & Tide*), Chrystal Macmillan and a number of other activists, founded a new feminist pressure group, the Open Door Council (ODC). The aim of this new group was to ensure ‘that a woman shall be free to work and protected as a worker on the same terms as a man, and that legislation and regulations dealing with conditions and hours, payment, entry and training shall be based upon the nature of the work and not the sex of the worker’ (P. Gordon and D. Doughan, *Dictionary of British Women’s Organisations 1825-1960*, 2001, 116). In particular Abbott and the ODC opposed the introduction of ‘protective legislation’ that limited and restricted the employment opportunities of women in industry.

In 1928 Abbott attended the International Labour Conference in Geneva to speak in support of equal pay for equal work, on behalf of a range of women’s groups including the ODC, the Six Point Group and the National Union of Women Teachers. She went on to serve as chairman of the ODC in the 1930s, and was appointed to the Executive Board of the Open Door International. Her advocacy work for equal rights for women in paid employment became a central focus for her activities during the 1930s and 1940s. This unerring belief in equal rights feminism resulted in her resignation in 1927, along with ten other members of the NUSEC Executive Committee, in protest at the NUSEC’s policy of prioritising a social reform agenda (referred to as ‘new feminism’) over ‘dead-level’ equal rights for women.

Abbott expressed her views as a feminist campaigner in a number of influential journal articles, essays and pamphlets. This included the now celebrated feminist response to the publication in 1942 of the report on *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (the Beveridge Report), entitled *The Woman Citizen and Social Security:* *A Criticism of the Proposals Made in the Beveridge Report as They Affect Women* (1943). Co-authored with Katherine Bompass, they argued that the Beveridge Report, which placed married women in a separate, less favourable category to single women when it came to social security, was responsible for perpetuating the ‘denial of any personal status to a women because she is married…the Plan penalises both the married woman and marriage itself’ (E. Abbott and K. Bompass, *The Woman Citizen and Social Security:* *A Criticism of the Proposals Made in the Beveridge Report as They Affect Women,* 1943, 4).

In addition to her extensive campaign work on behalf of women workers, Elizabeth Abbott participated in the interwar peace movement and was a member of the Women’s Advisory Council of the League of Nations Union (LNU), as well as sitting on its General Council. Another cause she enthusiastically supported was the defence of prostitutes, particularly their rights within the criminal justice system, and she served as chairman of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (renamed the Josephine Butler Society in 1953) for 10 years, and sat on its Executive for over 40 years. Although it is difficult to imagine she had any time for recreation her entry in *Hutchinson’s Who’s Who* (1934) lists her as enjoying detective novels and fishing, and as a member of the Women’s Automobile and Sports Association.

Elizabeth Abbott died on 17 October 1957 at her home, Freemans Farm, Thaxted, Dunmow, Essex. Writing in *The Times* on 11 November 1957 Dame Vera Laughton Matthews remembered her as a ‘remarkable woman’ who had devoted her whole life to working for the women’s movement. She recalled Abbott as having a ‘dynamic personality, passionate sincerity, and expert knowledge’ but who was also ‘warm-hearted and lovable, qualities which do not always go with those of a doughty fighter’.

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