

The Life of  
**Lydia Becker**

EXHIBIT GUIDE



## A new place to learn more about local heritage...

This historic building is being restored and transformed into a new venue for everyone to enjoy.

It will become a place that celebrates and shares stories of our town's past, present and future - with fun exhibitions, activities and community spaces open to all.

Thousands of people have already been part of the journey so far, through events, workshops, surveys and conversations.

Thank you to everyone who has shared ideas, memories and creativity, your input has helped shape the activities here today.

This little shop is an experiment space, to test ideas and hear your thoughts.



# The Life of Lydia

Changemaker  
**Scientist**  
Influencer



Scan the QR code to watch the video





# CHANGE MAKER

Lydia Becker challenged her family and society. She asked questions in a time when women usually didn't, and often did the unexpected.

From Accrington roots to global impact

**1827**  
**Lydia Ernestine Becker**  
 born 24th February 1827  
 in Manchester



1844-1846 Survey map of Altham published 1848. Lancashire sheet 63. National Library of Scotland records.



Lydia was home educated - surrounded by nature, with views of Pendle Hill and the local canal [pictured]. This inspired her love of learning about plants and astronomy, unusual hobbies for young girls back then.

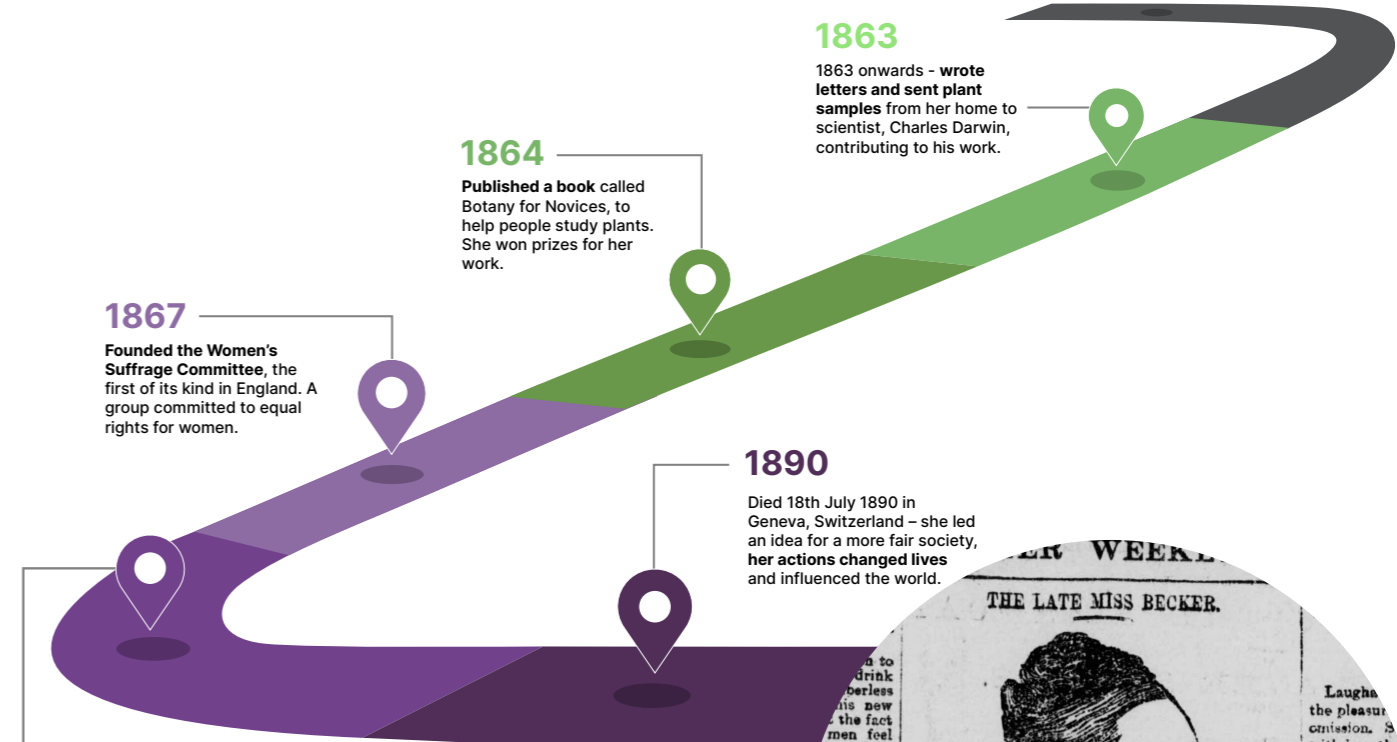


Lydia was the **eldest of 15 children** and helped care for the family when her mum died. Their family stone (pictured) is at St James' Church, Altham. Lydia never got married or had children.



Her father had a factory in Accrington, making dyes and chemicals for the cotton industry. He built Moorside House (pictured), Lydia's childhood home in Altham.

Image thanks to Lancashire Archives and Local History



**1863**  
 Founded the **Women's Suffrage Committee**, the first of its kind in England. A group committed to equal rights for women.

**1864**  
 Published a book called **Botany for Novices**, to help people study plants. She won prizes for her work.

**1863**  
 1863 onwards - wrote letters and sent plant samples from her home to scientist, Charles Darwin, contributing to his work.

**1890**  
 Died 18th July 1890 in Geneva, Switzerland - she led an idea for a more fair society, her actions changed lives and influenced the world.

**1868**  
 The first public meeting of the **National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS)**. Lydia said that **women should be able to vote**, just like men can.



You can visit the Lydia Becker Memorial in Altham (pictured) purchased after a local campaign and kind donation of stone from nearby Whinney Hill.



Death announcement. Manchester Weekly Times and Examiner. Sat, Jul 26, 1890, Page 6.

# SCIENTIST

She studied plants, drew pictures of them and preserved them. Lydia wanted to learn more and share her findings, but back then women were not allowed to join science groups.

She decided to start her own 'Ladies' Literary Society' which focused on scientific discussion.



She taught herself all about plants and wrote a paper on 'Smut Fungus' an infection which causes female flowers to grow an Anther (a male part that stores pollen).



These are some of Lydia's drawings of plants and flowers from her book, Botany for Novices.



Lydia developed a method of drying plants quickly under pressure and heat so that they kept their colour, winning her gold at a national competition for the best collection of wild plants collected in a year.

Lydia loved learning and sharing knowledge



Botany for Novices by L.E.B, 1864

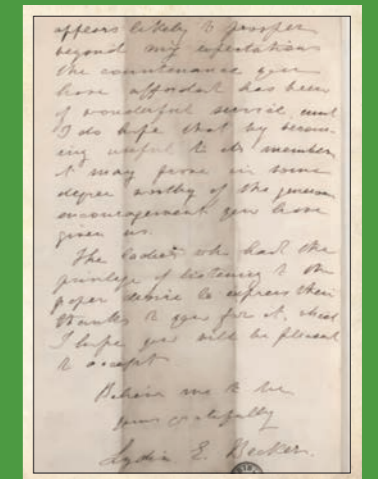
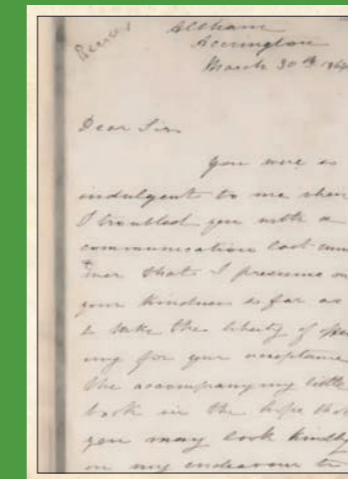
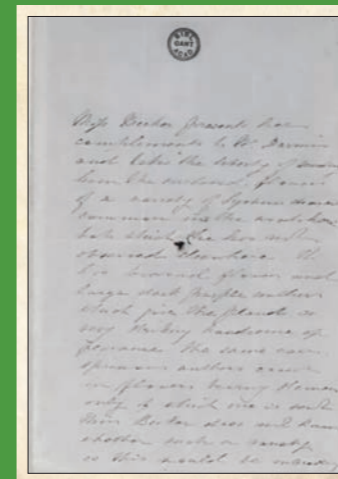
Why do you think Lydia didn't use her full name for her book?

Lydia exchanged letters with many prominent scientists about her research.

**18th May 1863**  
This is the first letter Lydia sent to Charles Darwin, where she sent him interesting samples of flowers from nearby woodland.

**30th March 1864**  
Lydia and Darwin had continued discussions, she sent him a copy of her 'little book' aimed at 'young ladies.'

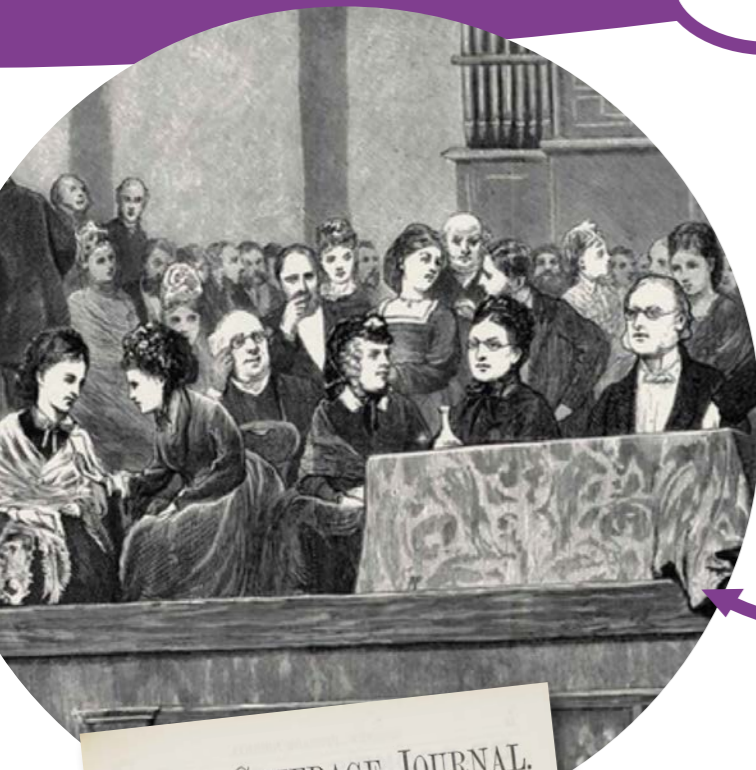
**6th February 1867**  
She thanks Darwin for his help and the papers he sent for her to present to the Literary Society.



# INFLUENCER

Lydia felt that science showed there was no reason men and women should be treated differently. She thought it was unfair this was not the case and wanted to change things.

She fought for women to gain the right to vote (Suffrage) and have their voice heard within politics. On this journey Lydia took bold but peaceful action.



Do you know the difference between a suffragist (like Lydia) and a suffragette?

Lydia travelled and campaigned across the world giving powerful speeches to thousands of people.

This picture shows influential women gathered at a meeting in London, including Mrs Fawcett, Mrs Mark Pattison, Mrs. Ernestine Rose, Miss Lydia E. Becker, Miss Rhoda Garrett.

Women's Rights, a Meeting at the Hanover Square Rooms. Illustration for The Graphic, 1872

In 1870 she founded the political magazine, **Women's Suffrage Journal**. She continued to be editor until her death, then the publication was stopped out of respect.

Cover from John Rylands Collection



She had big ideas and stood up for fairness

Look closely at the cartoon. What do you think the face in the top left means?

It's not always easy to speak up for what's right.

This cartoon from a newspaper is very unkind to Lydia Becker. The image says that her ideas are not welcome by the majority of people in power at that time.

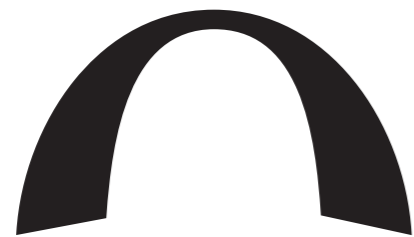
She didn't live to see women win the right to vote, but she helped make it happen.



Lydia Becker is shown wrapped in the Women's Suffrage bill, being thrown out of Parliament. From Punch, London, 20 May 1871

*"Her life was, indeed, spent walking against the stream. The world owes much to those who dare to do what is uncomfortable"*

Priscilla Bright McLaren (English Activist) about Lydia Becker



# Accrington DOME



Thanks to National Lottery players

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