

The Ladies Diary or The Woman's Almanack: 1704-1841

"WIT join'd to BEAUTY...lead more Captive than the Conqu'ring Sword"

The *Ladies Diary*, which was published once a year from 1704-1841, was one of the first popular magazines to appear in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Through the years, its name and editorship changed many times.

EXACT TITLES/TITLE CHANGES:

1706-1710 The Ladies Diary: Or, The Womens ALMANACK

The LADIES Diary: Or, The Woman's ALMANACK

1751-1760 The LADIES Diary: or, Woman's ALMANACK

1761-1829 The LADIES' Diary: or, Woman's ALMANACK

The LADIES' Diary, or, COMPLETE ALMANACK

THE LADIES' DIARY

EDITORS AND DATES:

John Tipper (1704-1713)

Henry Beighton (1715-1743)

Caelia Beighton (1743-1745)

Robert Heath (1745- 1753)

Thomas Simpson (1754- 1760)

Edward Rollinson (1761- 1763)

Charles Hutton (1763- 1816+)

Its initial format included calendars, astronomical observations, recipes, sketches, and articles on health and education; a format that was very typical. However, by 1707, the *The Woman's Almanack* included articles with enigmas, queries and mathematical questions. Problems were first written in verse: as demonstrated in Question 984, by Miss Nancy Mason, of Clapham, in the year 1795.

*Dear Ladies fair, I pray declare,
In Dia's page next year,
When first it was I 'gan to pass
My time upon this sphere.
My age so clear; the first o'th year,
In years, in months, and days,
With ease you'll find, by what's subjoin'd *,
Exact the same displays.*

$$xy + z = 238$$

$$xz + y = 158$$

$$x + y + z = 39$$

Where x = the years, y = the months, and z = the days of my age, the 1st of January, 1795.

However, as time went on, the verse was viewed as taking away from the mathematic vigor of the almanack.

The readership of this almanack is unclear. Initially it was not aimed at any particular class, but at women. However, as the *Almanack* became more mathematical, the readership probably changed. “In all probability it was the mathematical practitioners, their students and the virtuosi who made up the majority of the readers for the popular mathematics magazines of the eighteenth century.” The expansion of mathematical literacy affected both men and women, however; the roles into which men and women fell did not allow women to expand their knowledge of mathematics. Of 913 contributors to the *Ladies Diary* listed, 32 were women (this does not account for the possibility of male aliases). In addition, as is evident in the following table, articles contributed by women were also scarce.

Category	Total Items	Items by Women
Algebra; purely algebraic	135	17
Algebraic theorems	8	0
Arithmetic	18	1
Arithmetic of Sines	1	0
Astronomy, Geography, etc.	134	12
Chances, combinations, permutations, etc.	17	2
Curves	63	0
Dynamics	152	3
Fluxions	28	0
Geodesic problems and theorems	5	0
Geometric Problem Solving: -by Pure Geometry	175	7
-by algebra	242	10
-by arithmetic	96	12
-relating to max and min	39	4
Geometric arithmetic of sines	9	0
Geometric Theorems	35	4
Gnomics	18	0
Harmonics	2	0
Hydrostatics	13	1
Hydrodynamics	30	0
Indeterminate analysis- 1 st degree equations	19	2
- Diophantine equations	39	3
Interest, annuities	28	1
Isoperimetry	6	0
Navigation	16	0
Optics	8	0
Perspective	2	0
Pneumatics	11	1
Projections	5	0
Series	12	0
Spherics	7	0
Statics	39	2

Evidently, men (and not women) were largely responsible for the materials in and the editorship of the *Ladies Diary*. However; it does show that women had their hands in mathematics and had it not been for accepted social roles and stereotypes women would have also excelled in mathematics. The *Ladies Diary* is evidence of the expansion of mathematical literacy during its existence and gave women the chance to be a part of this expansion.

Source: Teri Perl, *The Ladies Diary or The Women's Almanack, 1704-1841*, *Historia Mathematica* **6** (1979), 36-53.

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April 27, 2004