

The Women's Suffrage Movement

Timeline

1832	<p>The Representation of the People Act 1832 Great Reform Act excludes women from the electorate. The first petition to Parliament asking for votes for women was presented to the House of Commons by Henry Hunt MP on behalf of a Mary Smith, on 3 August.</p>
1847	<p>The first leaflet advocating votes for women is published and suffrage societies emerge throughout the country.</p>
1866	<p>Twenty-five Irish women sign the petition asking for votes for women which is presented to the House of Commons in London by John Stuart Mill MP.</p>
1867	<p>Women campaign to be included in the Second Reform Act, without success.</p> <p>In November, Lily Maxwell, became the first woman to vote in Britain, though her vote was later declared illegal. Her name had been placed on the electoral register in error as she owned a shop and met all the qualifications required to vote under the 1832 act. She succeeded in voting in a by-election.</p> <p>Isabella Tod, who lived in Belfast, established the Ladies' Institute to promote women's education.</p> <p>The Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage (MNSWS) and the London NSWS are established.</p>
1868	<p>Richard Pankhurst, an MP and Manchester lawyer makes a fresh attempt to win votes for women. His wife and daughter, Emmeline and Christabel, go on to become the two most important figures in the movement.</p>
1871	<p>Isabella Tod established the North of Ireland Society for Women's Suffrage in Belfast and linked it to the London Women's Suffrage Society. Tod travelled throughout Ireland addressing meetings on the suffrage issue.</p>
1876	<p>The Dublin Women's Suffrage Society (DWSS) is established by Anna Haslem and her husband Thomas.</p>
1889	<p>The Women's Franchise League is formed and aims to win the vote for married women as well as single and widowed women.</p>
1897	<p>National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) is established with twenty societies signing up in London and elsewhere. Millicent Garrett Fawcett is elected President.</p>
1903	<p>10 October: The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) (its members soon became nicknamed the Suffragettes) held its inaugural meeting in Manchester, and declared that the women's suffrage situation was so serious it would have to pursue extreme measures of disobedience.</p>
1905	<p>14 October: Christabel Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the WSPU, was sentenced to seven days and her colleague, Annie Kennedy to three days for assaulting police at a meeting addressed by the Liberal politician, Sir Edward Grey at the Free Trade Hall. They elected to go to prison rather than pay fines.</p>

1906	<p>The term "Suffragette" is used for the first time, by the <i>Daily Mail</i>. It was intended as a derogatory name for women in the WSPU.</p> <p>Finland is the first country in Europe to give votes to women.</p>
1907	<p>February: The NUWSS, led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, organises its first national demonstration. It becomes known as the Mud March because of the terrible weather at the time.</p> <p>September: The Women's Freedom League (WFL) is formed, led by Charlotte Despard, in response to domination of the suffrage movement by the Pankhursts as leaders of the WSPU. The WFL favours democratic and constitutional organisation and aims to address a wider agenda of women's issues. WFL establishes the paper '<i>The Vote</i>'.</p> <p>Emmeline Pethwick Lawrence with her husband Frederick, launches <i>Votes for Women</i>, the suffragette newspaper.</p> <p>Under The Qualification of Women Act, women can be elected onto borough and county councils and can also be elected mayor.</p>
1908	<p>17 January: a handful of suffragettes chain themselves to the railings of 10 Downing Street. The WSPU also introduce their stone-throwing campaign. Emmeline Pankhurst is imprisoned for the first time.</p> <p>30 January: nine suffragettes are arrested following incidents at the homes of six cabinet ministers. The raids, carried out simultaneously, were part of a new strategy to harass prominent politicians opposed to the cause.</p> <p>13 February: Emmeline Pankhurst arrested and charged with obstruction while leading a deputation to Parliament. Refusing to be bound over, she and eight other women were sentenced to six weeks, her first term of imprisonment.</p> <p>Herbert Asquith, a notorious anti-suffragist, becomes Prime Minister. He refused to progress a women's suffrage bill even though it had passed its second reading. Instead he stated that the government intended to bring in a reform bill worded in such a way as to admit a women's suffrage amendment. In response, the WSPU held a demonstration on June 21st. Emmeline led several processions that converged on Hyde Park, attracting crowds of over 300,000. Asquith remained unmoved.</p> <p>The pioneering doctor, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson is the first woman to be elected mayor, of Aldeburgh in Suffolk.</p> <p>Edith New and Mary Leigh smashed the windows of 10 Downing Street in protest at the way in which the Liberal government treated Emmeline Pankhurst.</p>
1909	<p>5 July: the imprisoned suffragette Marion Wallace Dunlop, a sculptor and illustrator, became the first imprisoned suffragette to go on hunger strike. A member of the WSPU, Wallace Dunlop refused all food as a protest against the</p>

	<p>unwillingness of the authorities to recognise her as a political prisoner, and thus entitled to be placed in the first division where inmates enjoyed certain privileges.</p> <p>The government feared that the early release of these rebellious prisoners would make a mockery of the justice system and by the end of September forcible feeding was introduced, an operation justified as 'ordinary hospital treatment' to save women's lives.</p> <p>The North of Ireland Women's Suffrage Society changed its name to the Irish Women's Suffrage Society (IWSS). It was based in Belfast but had many branches outside the city in Bangor, Whitehead, Antrim and Derry.</p>
1910	<p>Lisburn Suffrage Society established by Lillian Metge.</p> <p>British Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith indicated that there would be no more Parliamentary time for the Conciliation Bill which was to extend the right of women to vote to around 1,000,000 wealthy, property-owning women.</p> <p>18 November is "Black Friday", when the suffragettes and police clash violently outside parliament following the failure of the Conciliation Bill. One suffragette, Ellen Pitfield, later dies from her injuries.</p>
1911	<p>Dame Ethel Smyth composes "March of the Women", the suffragette battle-tune.</p> <p>UK witnesses the first act of suffragette arson (orchestrated by Christabel Pankhurst).</p> <p>2 April: Emily Wilding Davison hid in a crypt at Westminster overnight so that on the census form she could legitimately give her place of residence as the House of Commons.</p> <p>Then, as now, the 'householder' listed everyone who spent census night on the property so one method was to spoil the census form by writing comments or refusing to supply information. Women walked outside, hid, or gathered at the home of a census resister.</p>
1912	<p>First recorded militant act in Ulster</p> <p>The IWSS carried out the first attack by smashing the windows of the GPO in Donegall Square in Belfast.</p> <p>The militant IWSS has 3,000 members.</p> <p>Two WSPU members caused public outrage when during a protest at Asquith's visit to Dublin a hatchet was thrown at him.</p>
1913	<p>Belfast suffragettes continue their violent protests throughout 1913, setting fires to post boxes and cutting wires in telephone boxes.</p>

	<p>19 February: Emmeline Pankhurst arrested for blowing up Pinfold Manor, the unoccupied house of David Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in Walton-on-the-Hill, Surrey. No-one was hurt and the damage was repaired.</p> <p>April: The Liberal government led by Herbert Asquith introduces the highly controversial Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-health Act, known as the Cat and Mouse Act to try and thwart the more extreme methods of campaigning. This allowed prisoners in ill health to be released on licence in order to recover so that they could be fit enough to be re-admitted</p> <p>April: Every time Emmeline Pankhurst was imprisoned, it provoked a strong response. Her conviction in April was followed, according to the WSPU, by the biggest revolutionary outbreak that Britain had seen since the struggle for the 1832 Reform Bill. Suffragettes damaged a goods train, cut telephone wires, ruined flower beds, and broke the glass of 13 famous paintings in Manchester Art Gallery. The most famous incident was when Mary Richardson (later known as 'Slasher Mary') attacked Diego Velázquez's painting of Rokeby Venus in the National Gallery and repeatedly slashed it with a meat cleaver.</p> <p>8 June: Emily Wilding Davison dies, in hospital, from injuries received, four days before at Epsom Derby when she stepped out in front of King George V's horse, Anmer and was knocked unconscious.</p> <p>Dora Mellone of the northern committee of the IWSF speaks in Hyde Park, London and tells the huge crowd that Irish suffrage societies were; <i>'Of all shades of political opinion, we have nationalists and unionists, orange and green, extremist and moderate. These women agreeing in nothing else agree on this one point... no one else has ever done this; the IWSF is the only political organisation which has ever held the north and south together...'</i></p>
<p>1914</p>	<p>Only Irish all male suffrage group, the Men's Political Union is established.</p> <p>March: a group of Suffragettes set fire to Abbeylands House in Whiteabbey causing £20,000 in damage. Madge Muir and Dorothy Evans were arrested for possession of explosives after arson attacks. At a subsequent hearing, prominent suffragette Madge Muir threw a book, a walking cane and handbag at the magistrate-hitting a reporter. During the hearing Dorothy Evans put up so much resistance she had to be restrained by a number of constables. The magistrate cleared the court and ordered that proceedings be moved to jail. The court was moved to a desk in the corridor outside Miss Evan's open cell door. Suffragettes in Ulster who were arrested were housed in the 'A' wing of Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast. Madge Muir and Dorothy Evans were released from after going on hunger strike. They were due to appear at the police courts, but instead drove through the city in a car decorated with Suffragist flags and were rearrested.</p> <p>April-June: Suffragettes set fire to 12 more centres of 'male authority' including Wallace Castle, Ballylesson Church in Lisburn, Cavehill Bowling and Tennis</p>

	<p>Club, and the Teahouse at Bellevue Zoo in North Belfast. At Fortwilliam and Knock golf clubs, women poured acid over the greens. The targets were viewed as places of male entertainment or power. Several women were arrested and housed at Crumlin Road Jail.</p> <p>4th August: Britain declares war on Germany on 4 August. During the war years, 1914-18, an estimated two million women replace men in traditionally male jobs</p> <p>Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst cease campaigning, support recruitment of soldiers and urge women to join the war effort.</p> <p>22 August: the most popular of the Ulster Suffragette groups closes its offices on College Square East in Belfast.</p> <p>NUWSS under Millicent Garrett Fawcett declares 'unconditional co-operation with the Government'</p>
1918	The Representation of the Peoples Act gave women the right to vote on the proviso that they were over 30 and either they, or their husbands, owned property.
1919	Nancy Astor is the first female MP to sit in the House of Commons
1928	Representation of the People Act 1928 Age qualification abolished to put men and women on an equal footing. All women over the age of 21 could vote.
1970	Equal Pay Act Men and women get the same wage for the same job.

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