

VOTES FOR WOMEN

THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN EDINBURGH



One hundred years ago no women and only some men had the right to vote for a Member of Parliament...

This exhibition telling the story of the long struggle to win the vote for women has been produced by the City of Edinburgh Museums as a contribution to the Gude Cause, a programme of events leading up to a re-enactment of the Edinburgh Procession and Women's Demonstration of the 9 October 1909.

The aims of the Gude Cause are to 'remember the dedicated work of so many women; to value their commitment and effort; to make sure that their work is not forgotten; to acknowledge our debt; to renew our commitment to social justice and to re-energise our activities for women's rights'.

The word suffrage comes from the Latin *suffragium*, meaning voting tablet, and is used

to denote the right to vote. The term suffragette was introduced in the *Daily Mail* in 1906 to refer to the more militant women, who gained publicity through their actions. The word suffragist refers to those who supported more peaceful or legal means of campaigning.

The main suffrage organisations mentioned in this exhibition are:

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies – NUWSS (peaceful) included the *Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage – ENSWS*

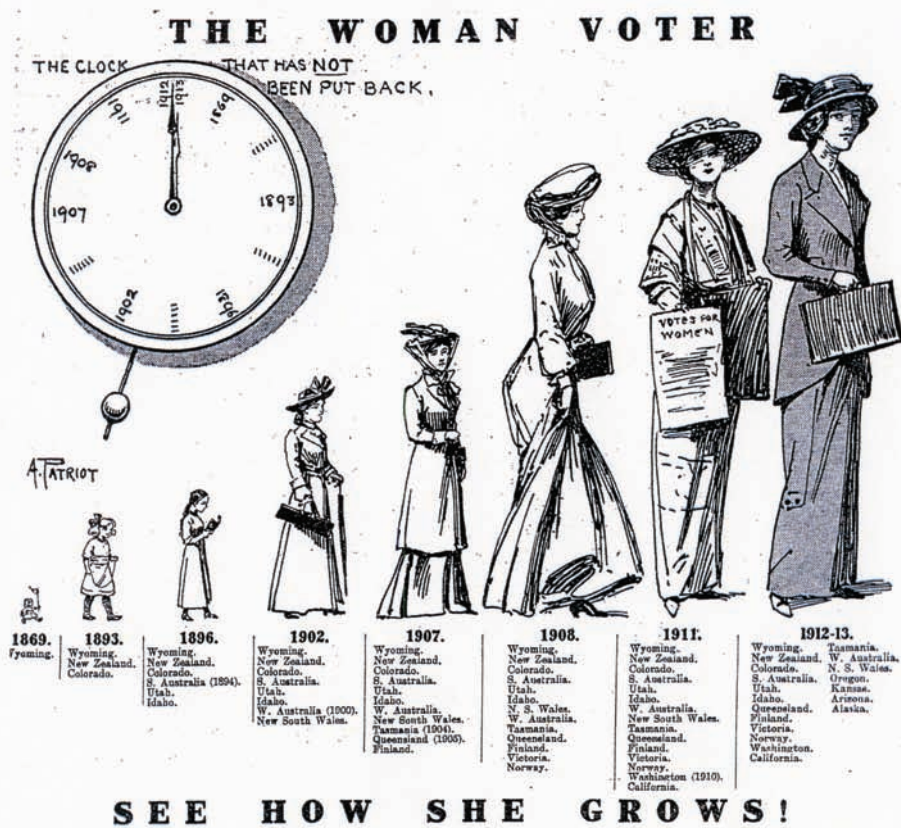
The Women's Social and Political Union – WSPU (militant)

The Women's Freedom League – WFL (partly militant)

The Northern Men's Federation for Women's Suffrage – NMF (peaceful)

Above: Procession and Women's Demonstration Edinburgh, 9 October 1909
Image: City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries

THE LONGEST DAY HAS AN END



1866

First amendment in favour of women's suffrage presented to the House of Commons by John Stuart Mill.

1867

Women's suffrage societies started in Edinburgh, Manchester and London.

1867-1892

Various bills for women's suffrage are rejected.

1897

Two national women's suffrage organisations merge as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS).

1903

Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst forms the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in Manchester with daughters Christabel and Sylvia.

1906

Jan – Liberals win the General Election; WSPU pledges to harass Liberals until the women win the vote; The *Daily Mail* uses term 'suffragette' for militant suffragists.

1907

Oct – Women's Freedom League (WFL) formed
Oct – First Scottish women's suffrage procession held in Edinburgh.

1909

July – First prison hunger strike by WSPU member, Marion Wallace-Dunlop, in London.
Sept – First case of forcible feeding of women prisoners in Birmingham.

1909 (cont)

Oct – Great Procession and Women's Demonstration in Edinburgh.

1912

WSPU become more militant.
Oct – The 400 mile march from Edinburgh to London.

1913

April – Prisoner's (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act – nick-named the 'Cat and Mouse' Act.

1914

Aug – Declaration of First World War; WSPU suspends militant activities.

1916

All-party conference drafts proposals for new legislation on women's votes.

1917

Representation of the People Bill passed.

1918

Feb – Representation of the People Act – vote to certain women over 30.
Nov – Armistice, women allowed to stand for parliament.

1928

June – Second Representation of the People Act makes women eligible to vote on the same terms as men.

Image above: Votes for Women 13 June 1913



BEGINNINGS

In Victorian Society the general view was that a woman's place was in the home.

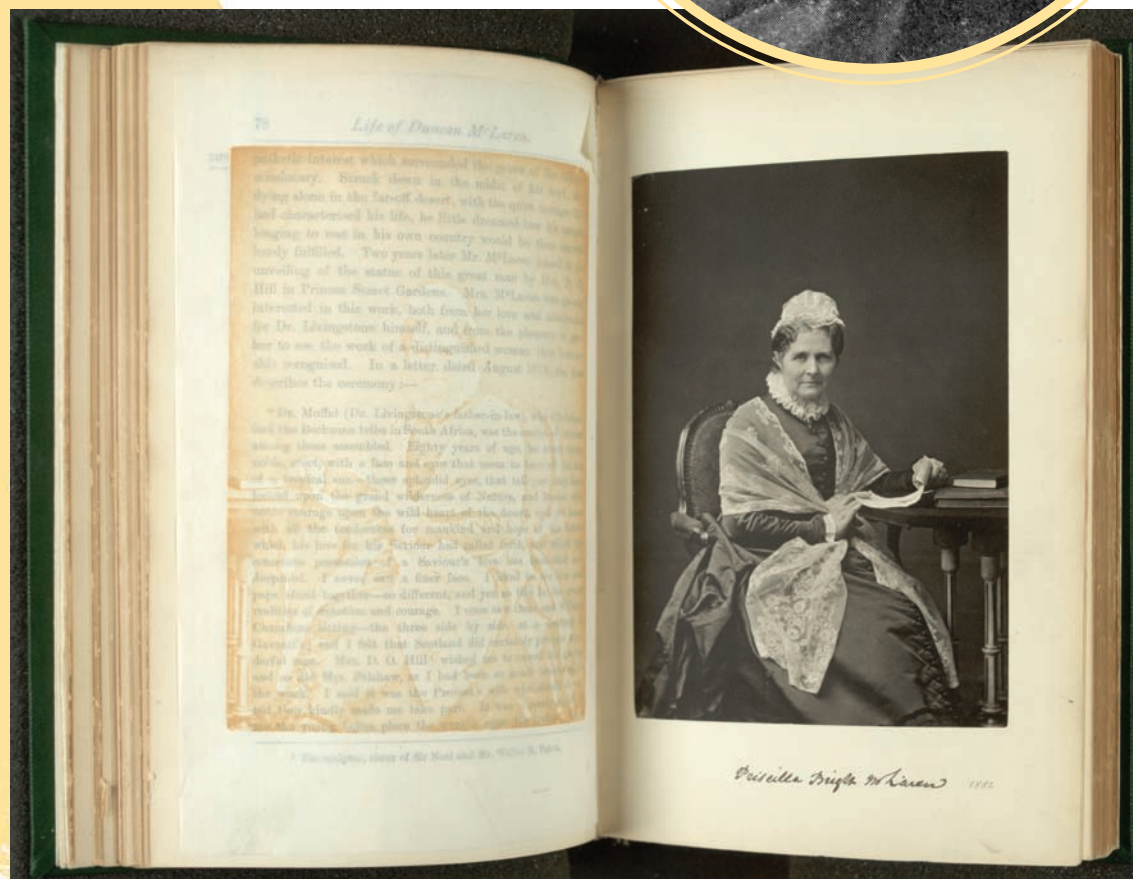
Most women did not enter further education or a profession, and women were unable to vote or to serve on any local government body. Many people thought that politics was beyond their understanding.



ELIZA WIGHAM

Eliza Wigham was born in Edinburgh in 1820. A member of the Society of Friends (known as Quaker), she was an active campaigner against slavery and for women's suffrage, temperance and peace.

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland



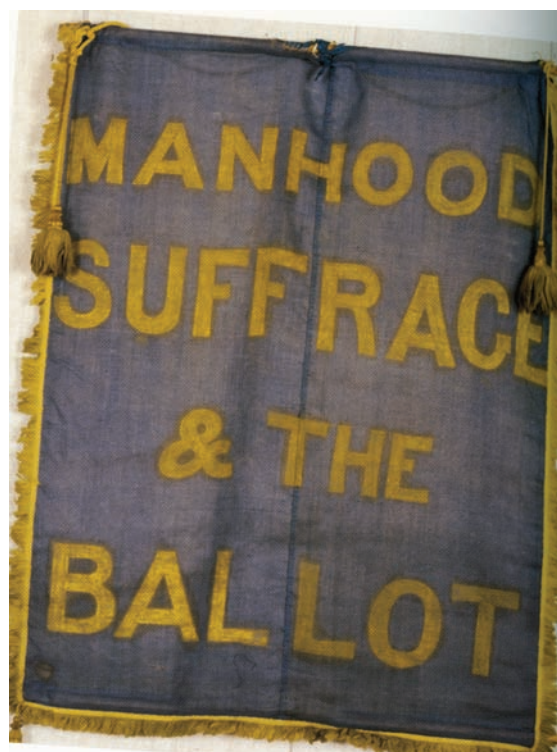
PRISCILLA BRIGHT MCLAREN

Priscilla Bright McLaren was married Duncan McLaren, anti-slavery campaigner, Lord Provost of Edinburgh and M.P. She became the first president of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage (ENSWs)

Courtesy Edinburgh City Libraries

Some of the early campaigners for women's suffrage had been involved in the movement for the abolition of slavery. Women had not been permitted to speak at the men's anti-slavery societies and the Edinburgh Ladies Emancipation Society was set up in the 1830s. It was led by the Quakers Jane and Eliza Wigham.

In 1867 the defeat of John Stuart Mill's women's suffrage amendment to the Representation of the People Act led to the formation of the first suffrage societies in Edinburgh, Manchester and London.



MANHOOD SUFFRAGE

Woodworkers' Banner carried in the 1866 Reform Demonstration. John Stuart Mill moved an amendment to the Representation of the People Act, altering the word 'man' to 'person' to which 74 MPs voted Aye and 194 voted No.

In the collection of the City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries The People's Story

EARLY SOCIETIES

The Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage (ENSWS) was founded in 1867, with Priscilla McLaren as president and Agnes McLaren and Eliza Wigham as joint secretaries.

Members included the Stevenson sisters Eliza, Louisa and Flora, who were influential figures in Edinburgh society. Louisa campaigned for women to attend medical schools and she and Flora were the first women in Edinburgh to hold positions on public governing boards.

Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair founded the Edinburgh Essay Society (1865) which became the Edinburgh Ladies Debating Society (1869). It provided a training ground for women in public speaking and gave them the confidence to campaign publicly.

In March 1884, the Scottish National Demonstration of Women was held in Edinburgh. The third Reform Act, passed later that year, gave many more men the right to vote, but no women.

The two national women's suffrage societies united in 1897 as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). Chrystal Macmillan and Louisa Stevenson were executive committee members of the Edinburgh branch, whose offices were in Shandwick Place. The NUWSS colours were red and white (with green added in 1909), their newspaper was *The Common Cause* and membership was open to both men and women.



FLORA STEVENSON

Flora Stevenson was elected to the first Edinburgh School Board in 1873 and continuously re-elected for 33 years. In 1899, she was the first woman to chair the Board and in 1902, a Primary school was named after her. She was an active member of the ENSWS.

Courtesy Edinburgh City Libraries



CHRYSTAL MACMILLAN

Chrystal Macmillan matriculated at Edinburgh University in 1892 and was the first woman to graduate in Science (1896). She was very active in the ENSWS and was on the executive committee of the NUWSS. In 1908, she presented before the House of Lords the women graduates' claim to vote.

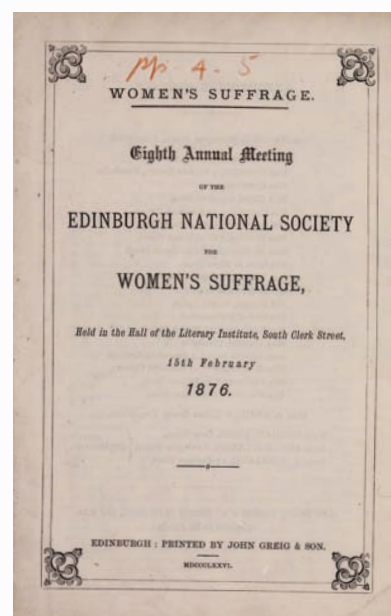
Courtesy Iain Macmillan



DR. ELSIE INGLIS

Dr. Elsie Inglis, campaigner for women's welfare was an active supporter of women's suffrage and an executive member of the NUWSS. From 1900, she was speaking at up to four suffrage meetings a week in Scotland. During the First World War she pioneered the Scottish Women's Hospitals abroad.

Courtesy Lothian Health Services Archive



ENSWS ANNUAL REPORT

Cover of 1876 Annual Report of the ENSWS. Priscilla Bright McLaren was president of the ENSWS from 1867 to 1906.

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland

THE WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNION

In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia formed the WSPU in Manchester.

They felt that because tactics such as signing petitions had been unsuccessful, a more direct approach was needed. This first involved heckling and interrupting speakers at political meetings. In 1906, the WSPU pledged to harass members of the newly elected Liberal government, with the slogan 'Keep out the Liberal' until women won the vote. Frustrated by lack of progress, the WSPU later embarked on a much more militant plan of action.

The colours of the WSPU were red and white until May 1908, when purple, green and white were chosen by Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, co-editor of the weekly newspaper *Votes for Women*.

'Purple as everyone knows is the royal colour. It stands for the royal blood that flows in the veins of every suffragette, the instinct of freedom and dignity... white stands for purity in private and public life... green is the colour of hope and the emblem of spring.'

In 1906, Teresa Billington was sent by the WSPU to Scotland to raise support and set up local societies. After hearing her speak Helen Fraser became committed to women's suffrage and was the first WSPU Scottish organiser.

In 1906, the *Daily Mail* first used the term 'suffragette' for militant suffragists. Most members of the WSPU were suffragettes. In 1907 and 1909 the WSPU organised large suffrage processions in Edinburgh.



THE PANKHURSTS

Christabel, Emmeline and Adela Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence in Edinburgh for the 1909 procession. The Pankhursts regularly came to Scotland to address meetings.

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland



FLORA DRUMMOND

Flora Drummond, portrait by Flora Lion. A leading member of the WSPU and organiser of events. Here she is wearing a pendant with the suffragette colours.

Courtesy Scottish National Portrait Gallery

WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNION BADGE



WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

In 1907, a group of women, led by Charlotte Despard and Teresa Billington-Greig, objected to the 'autocratic' Pankhurst style of leadership and broke away to form the Women's Freedom League (WFL).

Although the WFL defined itself as a 'militant' society, it disassociated itself from the violence of the WSPU. Acts of passive resistance and civil disobedience were preferred. By 1909, the WFL had a suffrage centre in Forrest Road, Edinburgh.

Anna Munro grew up in Edinburgh. She originally joined the WSPU but followed Teresa Billington-Greig into the WFL and became her private secretary. In 1908, she was imprisoned in Holloway Prison for six weeks taking part in a demonstration in London.

Dr Grace Cadell was a member of the Leith WSPU and later of the WFL. When she refused to pay house tax, her furniture was seized and sold by public auction at the Mercat Cross, Edinburgh, in June 1913. The WFL turned the event into a suffrage meeting. In 1913 and 1914, she provided refuge for women hunger-strikers released temporarily from prison, and helped them evade being re-arrested.

Nannie Brown and her sister Jessie were WFL Edinburgh activists. Nannie heckled parliamentary candidates, organised social events and addressed public meetings.

The colours of the WFL were gold, green and white and their newspaper was *The Vote*.

ANNA MUNRO

Anna Munro was the organising secretary of the WFL Scottish Council from 1908 to 1912. She spoke at the start of the Edinburgh-London march organised by the WFL in 1912 and walked the whole way there.

Courtesy Culture and Sport Glasgow (Museums)



"THE EAGLE" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 8.



MRS. BILLINGTON GREIG.

Mrs. Billington Greig was one of the first ladies in the country to impress upon the public mind the fact that the votes-for-women movement was no mere flash-in-the-pan agitation, but a grim, determined struggle with mere men. Mrs. Greig had not been often in Scotland until she gained a conquest over one of the opposite sex, and although it leaked out that she was to be married, it baffled all the pressmen of Glasgow to discover where or when the ceremony was to take place. Mrs. Billington Greig is as active as ever in her advocacy of the extension of the parliamentary franchise to women, and is now associated with the Women's Social and Political Union.

TERESA BILLINGTON

Teresa Billington (who married Frederick Greig) came to Scotland in 1906 to set up branches of the WSPU. In 1907 She left the WSPU to form the WFL.

Courtesy Culture and Sport Glasgow (Museums)



THE CENSUS

In Spring 1911, the WFL encouraged women to be absent from their homes on the night of the Census, 3 April. The boycott was supported by the Edinburgh WSPU which hired the Café Vegetaria where games, music and waxwork caricatures were organised to make the night pass enjoyably and to gain media coverage for their actions.

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

On 5 October 1907, the first Scottish women's suffrage procession was held in Edinburgh.



FLORA DRUMMOND

Flora Drummond – 'The General' organised and led the 1909 procession. She was also nick-named Bluebell after the Scottish brand of match, as she was considered to be 'more than a match' for the cabinet ministers. She was a leading supporter of the WSPU and organised a number of other suffrage pageants and processions.

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland

It was organised by the WSPU and as a peaceable event, other suffrage societies agreed to take part. Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman was due to speak in Edinburgh on the same day, but he refused to receive a deputation. The press reported that around 1000 suffragists participated in the demonstration and that it was witnessed by more than 10,000 spectators.



WOMEN ON HORSEBACK

'A number of other ladies appeared on horseback, but only one of them adopted Mrs Drummond's mode of riding. The remainder, who included Lady Steel and the Hon. Mrs. Haverfield, rode the orthodox side saddle and were gowned in the riding habit.'

The Scotsman, 9 October 1909

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland



THE 1907 PROCESSION

The procession leaving King's Park (Holyrood Park) 5 October 1907

Courtesy Trustees of the National Library of Scotland

Another larger suffrage parade was organised by the WSPU in October 1909. Known as the Great Procession and Women's Demonstration, its theme was 'What women have done and can and will do'. The procession was led by Flora Drummond, the chief organiser of the demonstration, astride her horse. It included women from many different groups, professions and trades across Scotland and a special pageant of women dressed as well-known historical figures. The WFL and NUWSS did not participate, but some members turned out to watch the event.



THE 1909 PROCESSION

'There was a perfect forest of bannerettes... All were in the suffragist colours of purple, white and green. The finest spectacle was that presented in Princes Street. The balconies, windows and doorways of the hotels, restaurants and clubs were crowded with eager spectators.'

The Scotsman, 9 October 1909

Image: City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries