



Fact File:

Votes for Women

The what, when, who, and why
of this important struggle

Key words

Suffrage: The right to vote for who represents you in Parliament.

Suffragette: A woman seeking the right to vote through direct action and protest.

Suffragist: A woman seeking the right to vote through peaceful actions like letter-writing and petitions.

Campaign: A series of organised activities, with a goal or aim in mind. Activities the suffragettes and suffragists took part in are examples of two separate campaigns.

Force Feeding: Feeding somebody by force. This was used when female prisoners took part in hunger strikes.

Hunger strike: Refusing to eat, usually in protest.

Militant: When a person uses aggressive or violent behaviour in support of a cause or belief.

Parliament: The group of people who make the laws we all have to live by.

Facts and Figures

Until the middle of the 1800s, less than 10% of people could vote - and they were all men!

Emmeline Pankhurst set up a group called the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. This is known as WSPU for short. The WSPU campaigned for women to get the vote.

The Daily Mail newspaper first used the word 'Suffragettes' to describe the women of the WSPU. This word was then used widely

1908: The WSPU used the colours purple, white and green. Purple stood for dignity, white stood for purity and green stood for hope.

1918: Around 8.4 million women in Britain gained the vote. This was after a long campaign by women and some men. Campaigners came from all backgrounds, and from across the country.

The People



Constance Lytton came from a wealthy family. She decided she had to do something so that women from all backgrounds were more equal. She left her privileged lifestyle and pretended she was called **Jane Wharton**. This was so that she was treated like a normal

Suffragette. She carved V for 'votes' into her chest whilst in prison. Constance was active in the campaigns against the Government, even through illness.



Emmeline Pankhurst was the leader of the British Suffragette movement. Her campaigns used more extreme methods.



Emily Wilding Davison was put in prison nine times. She was force fed forty-nine times. She once spent the night hidden in the Houses of Parliament so that she could write it as her address on the census. In 1913, she stepped out in front of the King's horse during a race. She did this to highlight the Suffragette cause. She died from her injuries.



Herbert Asquith was the Prime Minister from 1908-1916. He was against giving women the right to vote.

Key Dates

1869: Some female tax payers were able to vote in local elections around the UK.

1912: The Suffragettes began to use militant tactics. This was partly in protest of Mr Asquith breaking his promise by not signing a bill to give women the vote. He possibly didn't sign the bill because he worried women would use their votes against his party.

1914: Suffragettes stopped using militant tactics during the First World War. During the war, women began to take on a wider range of roles in society. This made people realise that they deserved greater equality and right to vote.

1918: The government made a law which gave women over 30 the right to vote. This changed to 21 in 1928, and 18 in 1969.

1919: Nancy Astor became the first woman to take a seat in the House of Commons.

1979: Margaret Thatcher became the first woman to become the Prime Minister.