

# THE 1866 SUFFRAGE PETITION IN IRELAND

Although in small numbers, women from all areas of the country signed the 1866 suffrage petition. Out of approximately 1,500 women who signed, 28 were from Ireland including five from Dublin, 12 from Belfast, four from Waterford and two from Galway.

## THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN IRELAND

The Republic of Ireland was part of Britain up until 1922 when it became an independent country. While the question of independence dominated Irish politics, Irish women still played a leading role in the fight for votes for women when the movement was at its peak.

One such woman was Isabella Todd. She established the first Irish suffrage society in 1872 and travelled across Ireland to spread word of the campaign. Millicent Fawcett, the leader of the suffragists at the time, corresponded with suffragists in Ireland and she often travelled there from England to speak at events. The Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) was established later on in 1908 and took on a more militant approach compared to the peaceful protests of the suffragists.

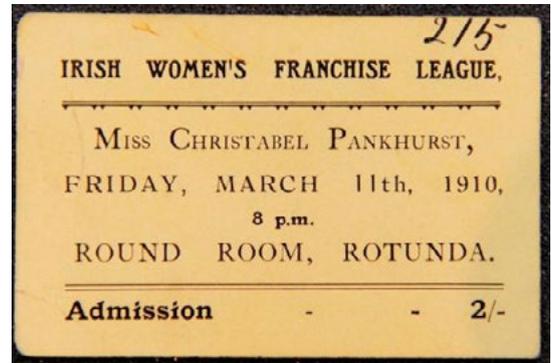
**28**  
women  
signed  
from  
Ireland





**Source 3**

Admission ticket to see Christabel Pankhurst speak at an Irish Women’s Franchise League event in 1910.



**Q: Why would the IWFL have been keen to recruit Christabel Pankhurst as a speaker?**

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**Source 4**

Drawing of the old Belfast Great Victoria Street station, 1854.



Terminus of the Ulster Railway.

**Q: How do you think the introduction of railways would have helped mass movements such as the campaign for women’s suffrage during the 19th and 20th centuries?**

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**ACTIVITY 2**

Anna-Maria Haslam was one of the women from Ireland who signed the petition in 1866. Using the information about her and the prompts provided, write a speech from the perspective of Anna-Maria in 1910, persuading women in Ireland to campaign for the right to vote.

**Biography of Anna Maria Haslam (1829-1922), Dublin – 1866 suffrage petition signee**

Anna Maria Haslam was born in Youghal, County Cork. Her parents were business owners in Youghal and were known for their charity work in the area, particularly during the Great Famine. It was through Anna’s experience in the soup kitchens and working with those hardest hit by the famine that her views on equality developed.

Anna became a teaching assistant where she met her future husband Thomas Haslam, who was a teacher at the school. Both were Quakers (a religious group with Christian roots) and were passionate defenders of equality. It was through the Quaker network that support for the women’s suffrage movement first developed in Ireland. The couple married and moved to Dublin in 1858.

Anna began to actively campaign for women’s suffrage in 1866 when she signed the petition. She later became a founding member of the Dublin Women’s Suffrage Association

and worked as a dedicated and influential member for many years. She worked tirelessly to organise meetings, write letters and collect signatures for petitions.

Anna was a committed activist in many nineteenth century feminist campaigns including a reform of the married women's property law and for educational reform.

She was one of the few petition signees who lived to see the Representation of the People Act passed in 1918. This Act of Parliament gave the vote to women over 30 who met the minimum property qualifications.

**I urge you to follow in the footsteps of the suffragettes by...**




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**Whether you are a suffragette or a suffragist, we are all fighting for the same goal. We differ only in our strategy. Let us not forget that while women in Ireland are still denied the vote, and while men still dominate our political scene, we must continue to...**




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**Thank you for listening**

#### List of sources

**Source 1** – National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies Poster showing the reach of its organisation across the country – Image courtesy of the London School of Economics.

**Source 2** – 1912 cartoon that appeared in the Irish Citizen – Image courtesy of Donna Gilligan.

**Source 3** – Irish Women's Franchise League ticket to see Christabel Pankhurst speak, 1910 – Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland.

**Source 4** – Sketch of Ulster Station in 1855 that appears in Tours in Ulster: a hand-book to the antiquities and scenery of the North of Ireland, John Borbridge Doyle, Dublin, page 1 – Public domain work found on Google Books.