

THE 1866 SUFFRAGE PETITION IN THE SOUTH WEST

Although in small numbers, women from all areas of the country signed the 1866 suffrage petition. Out of approximately 1,500 women who signed, 93 were from the South West including 29 from Stroud, 17 from Bristol and two from Falmouth.

THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH WEST

The South West played a key role in the nationwide suffrage movement with women across the region displaying determination in the fight for the vote.

In 1909, three women were arrested in Exeter after interrupting a political meeting. They later went on hunger strike.

In Bristol, in October 1913, suffragette literature along with a note demanding the release of a suffragette from prison was found near the burnt down Bristol University sports pavilion. A couple of days later a mob of students trashed the suffragettes' Bristol shop and office in revenge.

Eagle House in Batheaston, a village outside Bath, was a place of safety for women across the country. The Blathwayt family who lived there offered their house as a refuge to exhausted suffrage campaigners, especially to those recovering from imprisonment and hunger strikes.

93
women
signed
from the
south west



ACTIVITY 1

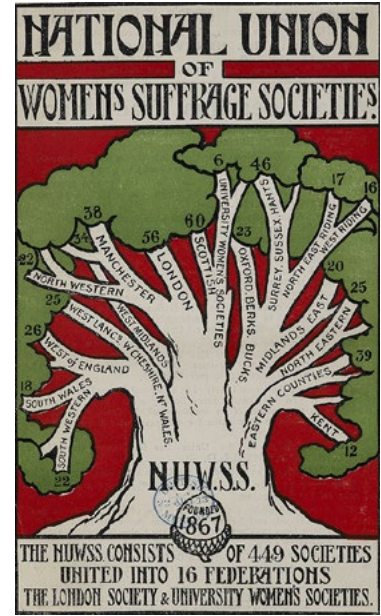
Use the sources and your own knowledge to answer the questions.

Source 1

A poster from 1913 promoting the suffragist campaign groups: The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

Q: Analyse the suffragist poster and describe three things it suggests about the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Source 2

Photograph of suffragists on a march from Land's End to Hyde Park in London, 1913.

Q: The woman dressed in black and holding flowers in the centre of the photograph is Florence Hill, an 1866 petition signee. Why might the suffragists on the march have placed her in the centre of the photograph?




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Q Source 3

"VISIT TO EXETER"

The Suffragettes, who are conducting a week's campaign in Exeter, undeterred by a pouring rain, addressed the employees at Willey's works during the dinner hour of yesterday. Miss Brackenbury was the principal speaker. She spoke from a chair to a large, orderly crowd. She addressed the men from under the large gates, and her pleadings why taxation should go with representation were listened to without practically any interruption."

An extract from an article in the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, describing a suffragette rally, 1909.

 **Q: Source 3 describes the moment a suffragette campaigner spoke to workers at a factory in Exeter. Why might she have been keen to address the men who worked at the factory?**

 **What role do you think the print media played throughout the campaign for women's suffrage?**

ACTIVITY 2

Read the biography of Florence Hill, one of the women who signed the 1866 petition, then use the prompts to write a motivating speech, encouraging the women on their 1913 suffrage march.

Biography of Florence Hill (1829-1919), Bristol – 1866 Petition Signee

Florence Davenport Hill came from a family devoted to social causes and on improving the lives of others.

Her father, a lawyer, was elected as the Member of Parliament for Kingston upon Hull in 1832. During his election campaign he publicly endorsed the idea of female suffrage.

Although he lost his parliamentary seat two years later, Matthew Hill never abandoned his views and spent his life championing the rights of women and the treatment of prisoners.


The family moved to Bristol in the 1850s and it was there that Florence signed the 1866 petition. She later visited Australia with her sister Rosamond where they took on the role of inspecting schools and prisons.

In the 1880s, Florence returned to London and was elected as a poor law guardian. Her role was to help oversee the workhouses and including the conditions experienced by the poor.

She remained committed to the suffrage cause her entire life. In 1913, a Suffrage Pilgrimage was re-routed through the gardens of her home outside Oxford so she, at the age of 84, could cheer on those marching. Florence Hill 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 felt the importance of adding my name to the first mass petition for women's suffrage in 1866 because...



Just as women from across the country came together to sign the petition in 1866, you have been joined by women from across this country on every stage of your march. Women showing solidarity for this cause is vital because...



Women's right to vote is about more than a cross on a ballot paper, it is not just a political issue, it is also a moral issue...

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 – Florence Hill photographed on the 1913 Suffrage Pilgrimage, a suffragist march from Land’s End to Hyde Park in London- Oxford Illustrated Journal, 1913.

Source 3 – Newspaper extract – (1909) ‘The Suffragettes – Visit to Exeter’, Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 28 July.