

# THE 1866 SUFFRAGE PETITION IN WALES

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 Wales including eight from industrial Swansea and nine in the market town of Denbigh.

## THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN WALES

Wales played an important role in the long campaign for women's suffrage. By 1913 the Cardiff branch of the non-militant National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was the largest outside London. Militant suffragettes were also active. One of these, Mrs Margaret Mackworth (who later became Lady Rhondda), was arrested after setting fire to a pillar box and when imprisoned went on hunger strike.

David Lloyd George was a prominent Welsh politician who served as Chancellor of the Exchequer at the height of the suffrage campaign. He was often the target of Welsh suffragettes. In 1912, in Lloyd George's home village of Llanystumdwy, he was asked to open a new village hall. A few words into his speech he was drowned out by a chorus of suffragettes shouting 'Votes for Women!' What started as a peaceful protest quickly turned violent. According to Sylvia Pankhurst 'Men and women were beaten, kicked, stripped almost naked,' and 'the hair of the women was torn out in handfuls.'

**28**  
women  
signed  
from  
Wales



## ACTIVITY 1

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

### Source 1

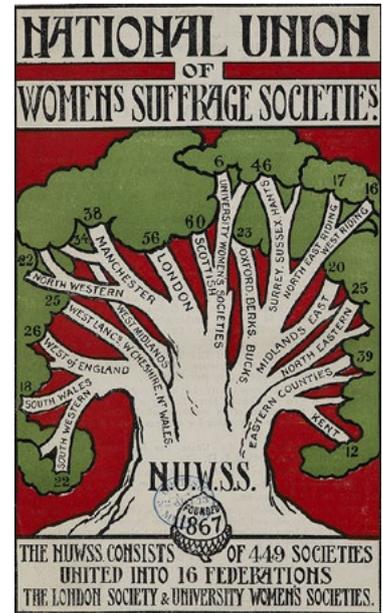
A poster from 1913 promoting the suffragist campaign groups:  
The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

**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

*'Another prosecution arising from the disturbance at the opening of the Llanystumdwy Institute by Mr Lloyd George in September last was heard at Pwllheli Police Court yesterday... Miss Jordan, giving evidence, said she was a member of the Women's Social and Political Union. While the Chancellor was speaking she interrupted, and the crowd thereupon set on her. She was repeatedly struck in the face, bitten on the wrist, and throttled.'*

Extract from an article in the Aberdeen Journal, describing a suffragette protest, 1913

**Q: What does source 2 suggest about people's attitudes to the Women's Social and Political Union? In what ways do you think occurrences such as the one described would have helped or hindered the cause?**

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### Source 3

Welsh suffragists taking part in the Women's Coronation Procession, London, 1911



**Q: Source 3 shows Welsh suffragists attending a procession in London. How do you think developments in communication and transport would have helped build links between local campaign groups?**




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## ACTIVITY 2

News of the 1866 petition was spread through word of mouth. Social connections, whether through location or familial ties, had a significant impact as women encouraged other women they knew to sign.

Elizabeth Mitchell was one of the women from Wales who signed the petition. Using the information about her and the prompts provided, write a response from Elizabeth's perspective to a friend arguing against the petition.

### Biography Elizabeth Mitchell (1833-1910), Llanfrechfa – An 1866 Petition signee

Elizabeth Harcourt Rolls was born in London 1833 but spent her childhood at her parent's country home, The Hendre in Monmouthshire. She came from a background of privilege; the Rolls family were landowners whose roots in Monmouthshire can be traced back to the early 17th century. It is because of the work of Charles Rolls, Elizabeth's nephew and the co-founder of Rolls Royce, that the Rolls family is well known today.

Elizabeth married Frank Mitchell, who served as the High Sherriff of Monmouthshire. The couple moved to an estate in Pontypool and Llanfrechfa Grange became Elizabeth's home for the rest of her life.

Over her lifetime she published two novels and several poetry collections. She was proud of her work and in the 1881 census recorded her occupation as 'Author of fiction & poetry'.

She was committed to the suffrage cause her entire life, right up to her final year in 1910 when she served as the acting-vice President of the London Society for Women's Suffrage.

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for your letter. The petition is intriguing but I will not be signing.

I believe the interests of women are already represented by our elected Members of Parliament. Years of laws prove that our MPs look out for the interests of both men and women without women having to be involved. We should be thanking our MPs for this.

When our brothers, husbands and fathers vote, I believe that they take in consideration the view of their wives, daughters and sisters.

There are things that men do better than women and some things women do better than men. We all have our own strengths and weaknesses and politics is the business of men.

Yours,

Anne

Dear Anne,

I am disappointed to hear that you will not be signing the petition. I believe it will be of historic importance and has already passed over a thousand names from across the country.

For me, this is a question of fairness. I do not agree that....




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I cannot agree that men are better suited to politics than women. If women were given the chance, we could...

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I hope you will reconsider adding your name to the petition.

Elizabeth

### 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** – Newspaper extract – (1913) ‘Sequel to Mr L George’s Meeting – Suffragists’ Case Dismissed’, Aberdeen Journal, 16 Jan

**Source 3** – Welsh Suffragists taking part in the Women’s Coronation Procession, 1911 – Image courtesy of the Museum of London.