

The extension of suffrage

A virtual museum by
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Welcome to a changing world



Step back to a time where wealthy men ruled the world. Equality was nothing but a dream yet to be achieved. In 1918 this dream became a reality.

UK Parliament - Early 19th Century

1. Less than 3% of the population in England and Wales were eligible to vote
(Excluding women and working class)
2. Only men that owned property could vote
3. A few large industrial Cities did not have an MP to represent them whereas smaller populated areas managed to have 2 MPs.



St Peter's Field, Manchester



- 16th August 1819 saw St Peters Field full with 60,000 people.
- They gathered with their homemade flags to protest for equality in voting
- It was a peaceful protest consisting of working class men, woman and children.
- Henry 'Orator' Hunt gave a speech on how all men and women should have equal rights. This speech got him imprisoned for 2 years.

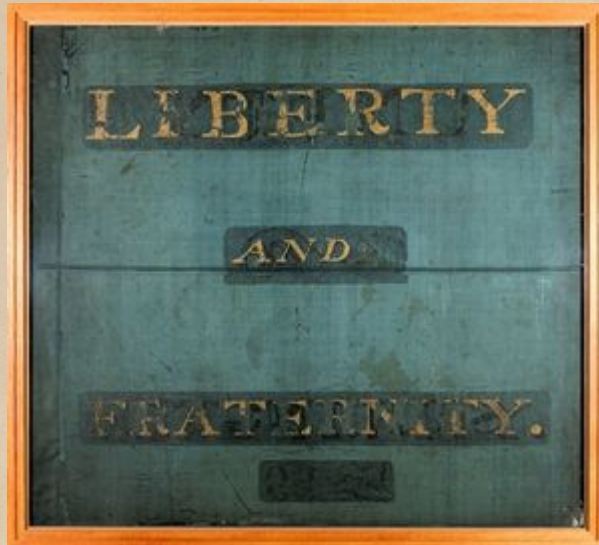
Peterloo Massacre



Due to the similarities with the bloody Battle of Waterloo this event was nicknamed Peterloo Massacre.

- Unbeknown to the peaceful protestors the Yeomanry were sharpening their swords for a fight at the request of the Magistrates.
- Soldiers were seen attacking the protestors with their swords and horses.
- 15 people were killed and over 600 were severely injured
- Following this, all meetings were forbidden however the campaign continued.

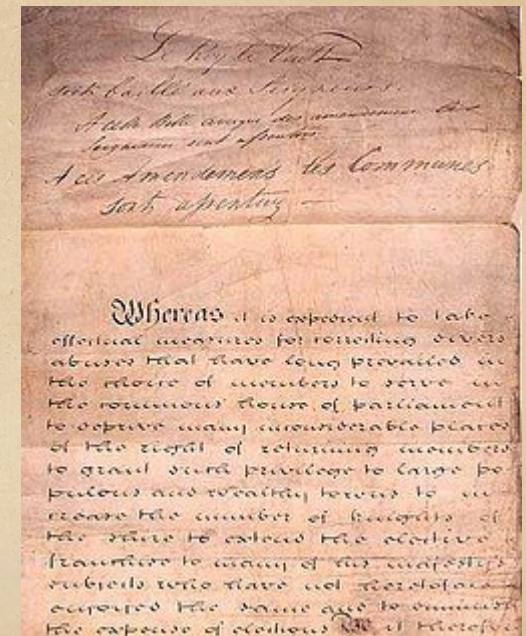
The world's oldest political banner was carried by Thomas Redford during the St Peter's Field protests. It is made of green silk embossed with gold lettering.



On one side of the banner it says "Liberty and Fraternity" and the other "Unity and Strength". The banner is displayed in Middleton Public Library.

The Reform Act 1832 - aka The Great Reform Act 1832

1. Prime Minister and member of the Whig Party, Charles Grey, passed the Great Reform Act in 1832
2. It removed seats in the House of Commons from 56 less populated boroughs in England and Wales of their voting rights
3. Reduced 31 boroughs to only one MP.
4. Allowed middle class households to pay a rental of £10 a year to vote
5. Created 67 new constituencies allowing more people to have a voice.
6. 8% of the population could vote however 6 out of 7 men and all women still could not vote



The Chartist Movement

The first mass movement following the failure of the Reform Act 1832, driven by the working class, its aim was to extend the rights to vote past property owners.

William Lovett and Francis Place, leaders of London Working Men's Association (LWMA), drew up the people's charter and they had six demands:-

- All men must have the right to vote
- Voting should take place by secret ballot
- Parliamentary elections every year, not once every five years
- Constituencies should be of equal size
- Members of Parliament should be paid
- The property qualification for becoming a Member of Parliament should be abolished

After the third rejected petition the Chartist Movement gave up. However, by 1918, five out of the six demands had been achieved

Industrial Revolution

Beginning in Great Britain, The Industrial Revolution:-

- Influenced almost every aspect of daily life
- Changed hand production methods to machinery
- Created chemical manufacturing and iron production processes
- Led to a rise in population growth
- Increased trade
- Improved the standard of living for the general population for the first time in history

The Reform Act 1867-1884

- Expanding upon the first reform act by extending the vote to all householders and lodgers who paid rent.
- Allowed working men to get an education at night school
- Trains brought newspapers to towns enabling working men to read them which gave them ideas and opportunities
- Women were still excluded from voting

Unsuccessful campaigns

John Mill & Harriet Mill

1831 Harriet wrote an essay called 'The Subjection of Women'. Following in her footsteps John wrote a pamphlet about the same thing.

This had no effect so they put together a petition, signed by many people including Florence Nightingale. Parliament were not interested at the attempts possibly due to their scandalous love affair.



Langham Place Group

Barbara Leigh Smith led this group between 1857-1866. They fought for women's suffrage and divorcee rights for women. Their petition was shown to parliament who dismissed them



World War 1 (1914 - 1918)



It was during WW1 that many women took on what was considered to be 'mens jobs' as the men were called up to fight. These were roles in transport, engineering and building ships as well as many others.

New jobs were also created, for example in munitions factories. The high demand for weapons resulted in the munitions factories becoming the largest single employer of women during 1918.

It was during this time that women were recognised as a possible equal to men in the work place.

Influential People



Lily Maxwell (1800 - 1876)

Lily Maxwell was the first woman to vote in Manchester in 1867. As a business owner and a taxpayer her name had made it on to the registered voters list. As her name appeared on the list her vote had to be counted.



Emmeline Pankhurst (1858 - 1928)

Emmeline founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). WSPU members were known as suffragettes, they took a direct militant approach to fight for women's rights to vote in the United Kingdom.



Millicent Fawcett (1847 - 1929)

Millicent Fawcett led the country's largest suffrage organisation, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), for over 20 years. She played a key role in the success of the peaceful campaign that led to all women's right to vote in 1928.

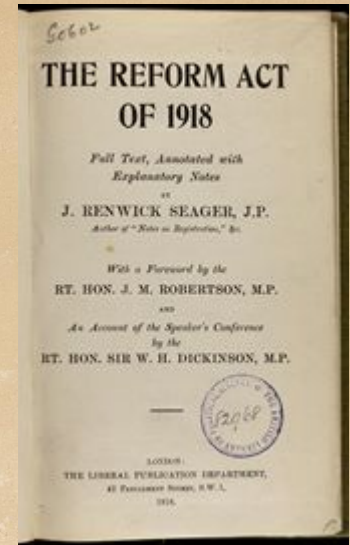


Lydia Becker (1827 - 1890)

Best remembered for founding and publishing the *Women's Suffrage Journal* between 1870 and 1890. She is also known for contributing towards Charles Darwin's scientific work. Lydia Becker escorted Lilly Maxwell to the polling station when she voted in 1867.

Representation of the People Act 1918

This Act allowed women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification to vote. Although 8.5 million women met this criteria, it was only about two-thirds of the total population of women in the UK.



Equal Franchise Act 1928

Finally in 1928 the Equal Franchise Act was passed allowing women over 21 the right to vote, finally achieving the same voting rights as men. This act increased the number of women eligible to vote to 15 million.



Our history is what makes us great!

