

Campaign toolkit



2018 anniversaries

How you can mark a special year
for our democracy and for the WI

2018 marks...

100 years since...

The Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed, giving some women the vote for the first time

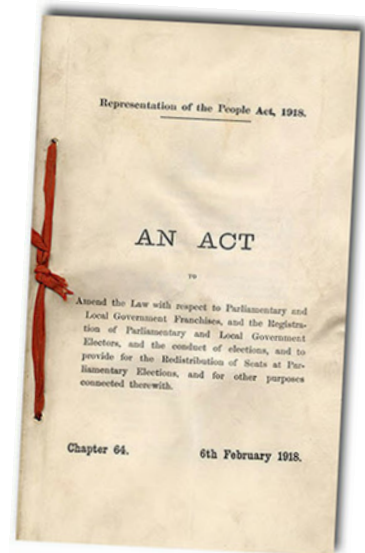
This Act gave all men and some women the vote for the first time. This Act widened suffrage by abolishing almost all property qualifications for men and by enfranchising women over 30 who met minimum property qualifications.

However, women were still not politically equal to men, as men could vote from the age of 21. The age qualification for women was to ensure women did not become the majority of the electorate. If women had been enfranchised based upon the same

requirements as men, they would have been in the majority, due to the loss of men in the war.

These women were able to vote for the first time in the General Election held in December 1918.

November 2018 is the 100th anniversary of the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918 which allowed women to stand for election to the House of Commons.



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90 years since...

The Equal Franchise Act was passed, giving all women the vote at age 21

Women still had to wait another ten years to gain the right to vote on the same terms of as men.

This Act finally gave all women the right to vote at age 21 - on the same terms as men.

60 years since...

The Life Peerages Act was passed

The Life Peerages Act 1958 was passed. This Act allowed women to sit in the House of Lords, which they did later that year.



Photo credit: The Women's Library

100 years since the first WI resolution was passed

Housing

That the provision of a sufficient supply of convenient and sanitary houses, being of vital importance to women in the country, County Federations and Women's Institutes are urged to bring pressure to bear upon their Local Councils and, through the National Federation, upon the Local Government Board to ensure that full advantage is taken in their districts of the Government scheme for State-aided-Housing.

Epping WI – Essex Federation Oct 1918

October 2018 is the 100th anniversary of the passing of one of the earliest WI mandates, which focused on the need for housing.

Over the hundred years since, the WI has passed over 400 resolutions and has achieved change on hundreds of issues that affect women and their communities across the world.

Resolutions have underpinned the WI's work to empower and support women within society, to shine a spotlight on taboo issues, and brought about many changes in legislation and government policy.

The WI's unique approach to campaigning still puts members at its heart, by offering every member the opportunity to turn a concern into a campaign through the resolutions process.

The WI's centenary report, *'The WI as a force for change: 100 years of campaigns'* looks back at the WI's campaigning legacy, and also reflects on members' views about what still needs to change.

To receive a copy of the centenary research report, please contact the Public Affairs Department.



The members learn to realise their responsibility towards the community in which they live, and, from an interest in their own village and their own country come to see the connection between their affairs and those of the nation at large. It would be difficult to plan a better training for the exercise of the vote - a training entirely divorced from all party or sectarian policies, based on the actual experiences of home life and home needs, and working outwards through a sense of responsibility educated not to take but to give'.

Grace Hadow, NFWI Vice Chairman, 1918

The WI and democracy

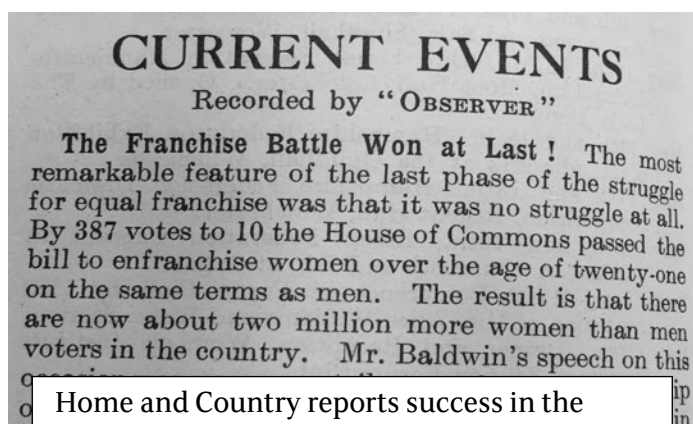
The WI was founded at a time when few women participated in public life.

The WI's pioneering early leaders showed real foresight in recognizing the potential of the organisation to help women reach their potential. The WI took a democratic and co-ordinated approach to organizing and mobilising women.

The WI founders instinctively understood that if women learnt how to chair meetings, work on committees, and built their confidence in speaking in public, these skills would equip them for a changing world and stand them in good stead for participating in other areas of public life.

This approach endured, seeing the WI offer British women training in democratic systems and the exercise of the vote. It also enabled members, many of whom had little prior experience – at least outside the home – of exerting power, to exercise influence.

This approach continues today, with the WI resolutions process offering every WI member the opportunity to put forward a resolution on issues they are concerned about, and to decide on resolutions that form the basis of NFWI campaigns.



Home and Country reports success in the campaign for equal suffrage, 1928



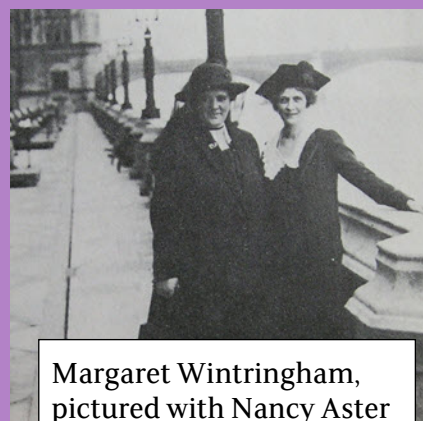
A press cutting from the Kent Messenger, 1965

Margaret Wintringham 'Our Institute MP'

Margaret Wintringham was the second woman to take a seat in Parliament and was elected as the Member for Louth in 1921.

'Our Institute MP' as she was known had been the first Honorary Secretary of Lindsey WI in Lincolnshire Federation and then became a member of the NFWI Executive.

Once elected, she worked with the WI on some of its earliest campaigns to raise the age of consent from 13 and to ensure that fathers supported their children born out of marriage.



Margaret Wintringham, pictured with Nancy Aster (the first woman to take her seat in Parliament) in 1922.

Women in public life in 2018

Despite much progress since the founding of the WI, there is still an urgent need for more women at all levels of public life. The 2017 general election saw a record number of women candidates, and more women elected than ever before. But women make up just 32% of MPs and at the current rate of progress it will take nearly 50 years to achieve equal numbers of men and women MPs.

The WI centenary research demonstrates that WI members feel much more progress is needed to ensure women are represented in leadership positions, public life and that their views are heard by decision-makers.

- A huge majority of members feel that more women are needed in leadership positions;
- 69% of members feel they have not very much or no influence over decision-making nationally;
- 39% feel they have not very much or no influence over decision-making locally;
- When asked to consider which woman from history would be the best role model for young women, Emmeline Pankhurst attracted most mentions.

Research undertaken by NFWI-Wales in 2010 with women who took part in a capacity-building project to support them to get more involved in public life identified the following key concerns:

- Lack of confidence in putting themselves forward
- Work/Life balance concerns – women often play a major role in providing care to children and family, as well as balancing work.
- Lack of knowledge and experience of politics
- Barriers to getting involved in a political party – such as the application process, funding challenges, access needs
- Perceptions about politics being an old boys club

Parliament

208 Of the 650 seats in the House of Commons, 442 are occupied by men and 208 women.

205 Just 26% (205) of members of the House of Lords are women.

Welsh Assembly

42% Just over two fifths (42%) of members of the National Assembly for Wales are women.

Local government

32% Just over a third of local authority councillors in England are women.

26% Women hold 26% of council seats in Wales.

Judiciary

25% Women make up 25% of all court judges.

43% Women make up 42% of tribunal judges.

Public appointments

44% 44% of public appointments made between April 2014 and March 2015 went to women.

Get involved

1. Organise a WI or federation visit to Parliament

Visiting Parliament is a great way to find out more about the history of the suffrage movement, as well as finding out more about life as an MP and the work of Parliament.

While visiting you could arrange a question and answer session with your MP to find out more about their work, and raise key WI campaigns with them.

You could time your visit to coincide with the Vote 100 art exhibition in Westminster Hall which runs from July to October 2018.

It will cover the campaign for votes for women, the growth of the male franchise and the representation of women in Parliament.

Make sure you take time on your visit to look at New Dawn, the artwork commemorating the long campaign for women to have the right to vote.

The metal and glass sculpture is sited in Westminster Hall, above the entrance to St Stephen's Hall, the location of many suffrage demonstrations.

Tours can be booked through your constituency MP. To find their contact details visit <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/> and enter your postcode.

2. In March: Theme your March meeting around equality and representation for International Women's Day

The NFWI is encouraging WIs to use the opportunity of International Women's Day to mark the anniversary and raise awareness of unequal representation at all levels of public life.

You could get involved by:

- Recreating suffragette costumes and holding a photo opportunity or stunt in your local community;
- Asking members to research a woman who inspires them (past or present) and tell their WI about her;
- The suffrage campaign was marked by the beautiful banners made by local suffrage societies. Why not make your own banner and hold a banner march or parade through your local town or village?
- Inviting speakers on this theme to your March meeting – you could invite a local historian or archivist to speak about the local suffrage history near you;
- Inviting women involved in public life to speak about their experiences – why not approach school governors, local councillors, charity trustees or the local MP and hold a discussion or question and answer session.

3. Promote the 50:50 Parliament #Askhertostand campaign

The NFWI is a supporter of this campaign which calls for more women in politics at all levels. The campaign aims to encourage, inspire and support political engagement, by encouraging parties to take positive steps to achieve a gender-balanced Parliament. The campaign also encourages everyone to support #AskHerToStand – a campaign to encourage everyone to ask talented and inspirational women to stand for Parliament.

To find out more visit www.5050parliament.co.uk.

4. Get involved in the 'Suffrage to Citizenship' project organised by the Women's Local Government Society

The NFWI is supporting this project which encourages local communities to research and identify local suffrage pioneers and commemorate them locally.

This project offers you the opportunity to work with local archivists and other community groups to find out about suffrage pioneers from your area, and work together to celebrate them.

To find out more visit www.suffrage-pioneers.net/

5. In June and July: Take part in Equaliteas

EqualiTeas is your opportunity to share, debate and celebrate our right to vote, over a cup of tea and slice of cake!

It's a UK-wide celebration of our democratic equality, with tea parties taking place all over the country between 30 June and 2 July 2018. EqualiTeas will mark the anniversary of the 1928 Representation of the People Act in which all people were given the right to vote on an equal basis.

To register your interest visit <http://equaliteas.org.uk/>.

6. In October: Celebrate 100 years of WI resolutions

October 2018 marks a hundred years since the first WI resolution was passed. You could organise an exhibition in a local library or your federation office to celebrate. You could also investigate past resolutions from your WI or Federation and the impact they had on our society.

Or you could organise a discussion event within your WI to consider the progress we have made over the last 100 years, and what still needs to change. You could use the event as a chance to plan your own resolution to submit.

To receive resources to support your discussions or a copy of our centenary report, contact the Public Affairs Department.

NFWI Public Affairs Department

104 New Kings Road

London

SW6 4LY

www.thewi.org.uk

020 7371 9300

October 2017

