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Chronological List of leading Events
in the Women's Movement
in Great Britain

BY

RAY STRACHEY

- 1792 Publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's book "A Vindication of the Rights of Women".
- 1817 Elizabeth Fry founded an Association for the Improvement of Female Prisoners in Newgate Prison.
- 1818 Jeremy Bentham approved the principle of Women's Suffrage in his „Resolutions on Parliamentary Reform“.
- 1819 Women demonstrators shared in Reform Bill agitation at Peterloo.
- 1827 Mary Somerville published "The Mechanism of the Heavens".
- 1828 Caroline Herschell and Mary Somerville elected members, Royal Astronomical Society.
- 1832 Women's Suffrage Petition from Mary Smith Yorkshire presented to Parliament by Mr. Hunt, M. P.
Harriet Martineau published "Illustrations of Political Economy".
- 1836 Women took part in Anti Corn Law agitation.
Caroline Norton published series of pamphlets on a Mother's Right to the Custody of her Infant Children.
- 1837 Queen Victoria ascended the throne.

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- 1838 Women's Political Associations formed as part of the Chartist Movement.
- 1839 First (limited) Act giving mothers some rights in their children (Infants' Custody Act).
- 1840 World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London. American women delegates refused admission.
Lord Shaftesbury's first Commission of Enquiry into Factory Conditions of Children.
- 1841 Caroline Chisholm began work for female emigrants.
Formation of Governesses' Benevolent Institution.
- 1842 Act to forbid Employment of Women in Mines.
- 1843 Report of Commission on Conditions of Employment of Dressmakers and Milliners.
- 1846 First Women's Suffrage leaflet circulated by Ann Knight of Chelmsford.
Mary Carpenter opened first "Ragged School" in Bristol.
- 1847 Ten Hours' Act passed, limiting Working hours of Women and Children in Factories.
Lectures to Ladies arranged by F. D. Maurice & Charles Kingsley.
- 1848 Queen's College for Ladies opened in London.
Resolution moved by Mr. Joseph Hume and defeated in House of Commons for Votes for All Householders, including Women.
- 1849 Bedford College for Women opened in London.
- 1850 North London Collegiate School founded by Miss Buss.
- 1851 Petition for Women's Suffrage from Female Political Association of Sheffield presented to House of Lords by Lord Carlyle.
- 1852 Mary Carpenter gave evidence to Parliamentary Commission on the prevention of delinquency, and founded Reformatory at Bristol.
- 1854 Louisa Twining secured permission for ladies to visit work-houses.

- Barbara Leigh Smith (Mme Bodichon) published "A Brief Statement of Laws concerning Women".
- 1855 Committee to secure married women's right to hold property formed.
Formation of Workhouse visiting Society.
- 1857 First Marriage and Divorce Act making divorce possible for women in certain cases.
Act enabling women to be Poor Law Guardians.
Florence Nightingale returned from Crimea and founded St. Thomas's Training School for Nurses.
National Association for the Promotion of Social Science formed, and women admitted.
- 1858 First swimming bath opened to women.
Englishwoman's Journal began publication.
Ladies Sanitary Association formed.
Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women formed.
Cheltenham Ladies College developed by Miss Beale.
- 1859 Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell (of U. S. A.) admitted to British Medical Register (Register then closed to holders of foreign degrees).
- 1860 Elizabeth Garrett entered Middlesex Hospital as a nurse with permission to attend lectures: subsequently permission withdrawn.
- 1861 John Stuart Mill published "Representative Government".
- 1862 Committee to secure admission of women to university examinations formed by Emily Davies.
- 1863 Girls admitted (informally) to take Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations.
- 1864 Schools Enquiry Commission set up. Inclusion of Girls' Schools secured by Emily Davies.
- 1865 Oxford & Cambridge Local Examinations formally opened to girls.

- J. S. Mill returned to Parliament after making Women's Suffrage a prominent issue in his election programme.
Elizabeth Garrett passed Society of Apothecaries examination and obtained licence to practice medicine. (Women subsequently refused admission to this examination).
- 1866 Petition to House of Commons for Women's Suffrage presented by J. S. Mill and Henry Fawcett.
Huxley's Lay Sermons published advocating Women's Suffrage.
- 1867 First Women's Suffrage Committees formed in London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham.
Parliamentary debate on Women's Suffrage Amendment to Reform Bill moved by J. S. Mill. Defeated.
First public meetings for Women's Suffrage.
Committee for securing University Education for Women formed by Emily Davies.
Anne J. Clough and Josephine Butler formed North of England Council for Lectures to Ladies.
- 1868 Case (Chorlton v. Lings) of women householders of Manchester claiming parliamentary vote argued by Sir John Coleridge and Dr. Pankhurst, and lost.
- 1869 J. S. Mill published "The Subjection of Women".
Municipal Franchise extended to women householders.
First Women's College founded temporarily at Hitchin.
First Lectures to Ladies in Cambridge.
Schools Endowment Act enabling educational endowments to be used for girls' schools.
- 1870 Riot of medical students against women students at Edingburgh.
First women elected to School Boards.
First women sat (informally) for Cambridge University Entrance examination.
Formation of Ladies' National Association for Repeal of Contagious Diseases Acts.
Mr. Jacob Bright introduced Women's Suffrage Bill in House of Commons. Defeated on second reading.
Act to allow married women to own their earnings.

- 1871 First house taken in Cambridge for women students from elsewhere: Anne J. Clough in charge.
Royal Commission on Contagious Diseases Acts reported in favour of their abolition.
- 1872 First women employed in Post office.
Slade School of Art opened to women.
Pharmaceutical Society opened to women
- 1873 Edinburgh University refused degrees to medical women.
First three women from Hitchin took Cambridge Tripos examinations (informally).
Senate of Cambridge University refused grace to grant degrees to women.
Temporary College at Hitchin moved to Girton.
First woman Poor Law Inspector of Workhouses appointed.
Lectures to Ladies begun at Oxford.
First Public Day School for girls opened.
- 1894 London School of Medicine for Women founded by Sophia Jex Blake.
Girl's Friendly Society formed.
- 1875 First Women's Trade Union formed.
Act passed to enable universities to admit women.
Women's Suffrage Bill defeated on 2nd reading in House of Commons.
First women elected Poor Law Guardians.
Salvation Army adopted principle of equality for men and women officers.
Newnham College opened at Cambridge.
- 1876 Women's Suffrage Bill defeated on 2nd reading in House of Commons.
- 1877 Irish Universities granted medical degrees to women.
Women admitted as medical students to Royal Free Hospital.
- 1878 London University gave degrees to women.
Matrimonial Causes Act allowed legal separation for wives with custody of children.
Women's Suffrage Bill talked out in House of Commons.

- 1879 Somerville College and Lady Margaret Hall opened at Oxford.
- 1880 Women's Suffrage Act passed in Isle of Man.
London University granted full membership to women.
First public mass meeting for Women's Suffrage.
- 1881 Midwives' Institute founded.
Bill to raise age of consent introduced. Progress blocked.
- 1882 Full Consolidated Married Women's Property Act passed.
- 1883 Repeal of Contagious Diseases Acts approved by Resolution in House of Commons.
- 1884 Women's Suffrage Amendment to Reform Bill defeated.
Matrimonial Causes Act improving facilities for divorce (terms for men and women unequal).
- 1885 W. T. Stead published "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" and was imprisoned.
Bill to raise age of consent passed.
Women's Suffrage Bill passed 2nd reading in House of Commons. Then blocked.
Primrose League (Conservative Women's Association) formed.
- 1886 Women's Liberal Federation formed.
Women's Liberal Unionist Association formed.
Repeal of Contagious Diseases Acts.
Guardianship of Infants' Act passed (requiring mother to be included among guardians).
- 1887 Women admitted to Dental Schools.
- 1888 First women elected to County Councils.
Cambridge University refused to give degrees to women.
- 1889 Women's Trade Union League formed by Trade Union Congress.
- 1890 Philippa Fawcett "above Senior Wrangler" in Cambridge Mathematical Tripos.
- 1892 Swanley Horticultural College for Women opened.

- Women's Suffrage Bill defeated on 2nd Reading in House of Commons.
British Medical Association admitted women.
Royal Geographical Society admitted women.
Scottish Universities admitted women to membership.
- 1894 University Examinations (without degrees) opened to women students at Oxford.
- 1895 Royal College of Surgeons admitted women to membership.
Royal College of Physicians refused to admit women.
- 1897 Women's Suffrage Bill passed on 2nd reading. Progress blocked.
Local Women's Suffrage Societies united in National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.
- 1900 Petition for Women's Suffrage to Parliament sent by 67000 textile workers.
- 1902 First Registration of Midwives' Act.
- 1903 Formation of Women's Social and Political Union (Militant Suffrage Society).
- 1904 Resolution on Women's Suffrage carried in House of Commons. No progress.
- 1905 First militant disturbance, Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney arrested.
- 1906 Great joint deputation on Women's Suffrage to Prime Minister. No result.
First militant outbreak in precincts of Parliament.
First Women's Suffrage candidate at by-election (Wigan). Defeated.
- 1907 First Women's Suffrage procession in London (Mud March).
Women's Suffrage Bill defeated in House of Commons.
- 1908 First Woman Mayor (Mrs. Garrett Anderson at Aldeburgh).
Anti-Suffrage Society of Women formed.
Women's Suffrage Bill passed 2nd reading in House of Commons. Progress blocked.
Anti-Suffrage Society of Men formed.

- 1909 Mens' League for Women's Suffrage formed.
Militant suffragists adopted policy of hunger strike in prison.
Women's Freedom League formed and also many special W. S. Societies such as Catholic Women, Jewish Women, Artists, Actresses etc. National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies now included 411 separate societies.
- 1910 Conciliation Committee formed in House of Commons.
Truce to militancy.
Voters' Petition (300,000 men) collected at General Election.
131 Town Councils petitioned Parliament to grant Women's Suffrage.
Conciliation Bill passed in House of Commons but progress refused by Liberal Government.
- 1911 Militancy resumed and intensified.
Conciliation Bill again passed in House of Commons in May and defeated in October. Government Franchise Bill open to Women's Suffrage amendment promised by Liberal Government.
- 1912 Women's Social and Political Union leaders arrested and sentenced to 9 months for conspiracy. Released after hunger strike.
- 1913 Government Franchise Bill introduced: ruled not open to amendment. Withdrawn.
Violent outbreak of militancy. Mrs. Pankhurst sentenced to 3 years' penal servitude.
"Cat and Mouse" Act passed to require suffragette prisoners to complete sentences, after temporary release on hunger strike.
Emily Davidson threw herself before horses at Epsom (the Derby) as protest against treatment of Women's Suffrage, and was killed.
Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage to London from all parts of country. Vast mass meetings held.
Women's Suffrage Bill defeated in House of Lords.
- 1914 to August. Great intensification of Women's Suffrage propaganda in all parts of the country.

- 1914 to 1918 European War. Activity of women throughout country in every type of war work: nursing and medical work, munitions, care of troops, dependents, refugees etc., etc., followed by rapid substitution of women for men in every kind of industrial and commercial work. Great success of women in such work and strong swing of popular sentiment in favour of their right to vote.
- 1915 National agreements to protect men's Trade Union rates of pay by paying substitute women at same rates.
- 1916/17 Formation of Women's Legion, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Women's Royal Naval Service, Women's Royal Air Force Service, Women's Land Army etc.
- 1916 Question of new Parliamentary register discussed in Parliament. Women's claim for inclusion admitted. Speakers' Conference appointed by Prime Minister to draft Bill.
- 1917 Speaker's Conference reported in favour of Women's Suffrage on compromise terms. Consultative Committee of all Women's Suffrage Societies accepted compromise. Great demonstration of women war workers for Women's Suffrage Representation of the People Bill: Women's Suffrage amendment accepted by House of Commons (385—55). Amendment to extend municipal vote to wives of householders accepted by Government.
Order of Dames of the British Empire instituted.
- 1918 Representation of the People Bill (with Women's Suffrage amendments) passed in House of Lords (134—71). Royal Assent given. Women householders and the wives of householders over age of 30 thereby enfranchised.
Act enabling women to be elected to House of Commons.
Registration of Midwives Act amended and improved.
Affiliation Orders Act (increasing maximum payment by fathers of illegitimate children to 10/— a week).
- 1919 First woman elected to House of Commons (The Viscountess Astor: by-election Plymouth).
Sex Disqualification Removal Act (admitting women to legal profession, jury and magistrate service, police, the Home Civil Service and all Incorporated and Chartered Societies).

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- Nurses' Registration Act. Establishment of General Nursing Council.
- 1920 House of Commons Resolution for equal entry and conditions of women in Civil Service passed.
Matrimonial Orders Enforcement Act.
Infanticide Act.
- 1921 Second woman elected to House of Commons (Mrs. Wintringham, By-election, Louth).
House of Commons Resolution for equal pay for men and Women in Civil Service passed. No action.
- 1922 First woman included in Great Britain delegation to League of Nations.
Married Women's Maintenance Act (allowing payments for children as well as wives in cases of legal separation).
Peeresses refused admission to House of Lords.
Criminal Law Amendment Act (raising age of consent to 16).
Law of Property Act (giving mothers and daughters same position as fathers and sons in cases of intestacy).
- 1923 First woman chairman Trade Union Congress (Miss Margaret Bondfield).
Bastardy Act (increasing maximum payment of father of illegitimate child to 20/— a week).
8 women elected to House of Commons at General Election.
Matrimonial Causes Act (establishing equal grounds for divorce for men and women).
- 1924 First 2 women hold office in Government as Parliamentary Secretaries.
Women appointed fully attested police constables.
Admission of women to open competitive examination for Administrative Class of Civil Service. Three women successful.
- 1925 Equal Guardianship of Infants' Act.
Separation and Maintenance Act.
House of Commons Resolution passed in favour of married women to keep nationality. No action.
Widows Pensions Act.

- 1926 Adoption of Children Act.
Midwives and Maternity Homes Act amended.
First woman chairman Conservative Party Organization (Dame Caroline Bridgeman).
Legitimacy Act (making legitimate the children of parents subsequently married).
- 1927 Nursing Homes Registration Act.
- 1928 Representation of the People Act, giving Women's Suffrage on equal terms.
- 1929 Infant Life Protection Act.
Age of Marriage Act (raising age of marriage to 16 for both sexes).
Children (Employment abroad) Act to extend protection to young persons up to 18.
First woman Cabinet Minister (Miss Margaret Bondfield, Minister of Labour).
Widows' Pensions further extended.
- 1931 National Health Insurance Act (to reduce benefits payable to women, especially married women).
Sentence of Death (Expectant Mothers) Act: to prevent passing of death sentence on pregnant women.
Unemployment Insurance Act (No. 3): imposed specially difficult conditions of benefit on married women.
Children and Young Persons Act (to provide protection for children and regulate their employment).
British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act (to prevent loss of nationality when woman does not by marriage acquire nationality of her husband).
- 1934 Shops Act (to regulate hours of employment of young persons in shops).
- 1935 Law Reform Act (to put married women in same position as single in regard to debt, bankruptcy etc.),
- 1936 Hours of Employment Act (to exempt women in managerial posts from prohibition of night work).

Employment of Women and Young Persons Act (to allow employment of women and young persons on the shift system).

Education Act (to raise school leaving age to 15 with certain exceptions).

Midwives' Act (to improve midwifery service throughout the country).

1937 Divorce Act (to allow new grounds of divorce equally for men and women).

Summary Procedure (Domestic Proceedings) Act (to institute Courts of Domestic Relations).

National Health Insurance Act (to extend insurance to young persons under 16).

Pensions (Voluntary Contributors) Act (to extend benefits of State insurance to independent workers, but with the proviso that income limit for men should be £ 400, for women £ 250).

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